Original Article

Creative labour in Shanghai: Questions on politics, composition and ambivalence

Anja Kanngieser
RMIT University, School of Media and Communication, Building 9, Level 5, City campus, 124 La Trobe Street, Melbourne, Australia.

Abstract This article introduces and opens discussion on some of the conditions and ambivalences encountered by the rising creative workforce in Shanghai, through engagement with theories of immaterial labour. Drawing from conversations with several Chinese creative workers, the text aims to provoke thought on the potential for political organisation and resistance within fractalised creative sectors mobilised by high levels of innovation, entrepreneurialism, competition and aspiration. By focusing on processes of subjectivation and desire, it calls for considerations of what might constitute political registers in the Shanghainese creative fields.
Subjectivity (2012) **5**, 54–74. doi:10.1057/sub.2011.25

Keywords: creative labour; subjectivation; Bifo Berardi; Shanghai; young workers

Introduction

In *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-alpha Generation*, Bifo Berardi poses a question that has engaged political philosophers and organisers since the turn of the millennium. How can we organise labour within a current capitalist paradigm typified by flexibilised and so-called immaterial and cognitive forms of production? 'How can we oppose', asks Berardi, 'the … slavery that is affirmed as a mode of command of precarious and depersonalized work?' 'The answer', he continues, 'does not come out because the form of resistance and struggle that were efficacious in the twentieth century no longer appear to have the capacity to spread and consolidate themselves, nor consequently can they stop the absolutism of capital' (2009a, pp. 33–34).

These forms are no longer efficacious, contends Berardi, in great part because fractured and disparate working conditions mean that workers

no longer share a common spatio-temporal existence. While these kinds of workers can, and do, rebel, it no longer catalyses sustained activity. The demise of a common spatio-temporal context is not the only hindrance, however. When the productive capacities of the soul itself, defined by Berardi as 'intelligence, sensibility, creativity and language' (2009b, p. 192), are put to work, the question of organisation intersects with questions of relationality and desire. Even more so when the worker begins to 'value labor as the most interesting part of his or her life', and seeks not to escape the 'prolongation of the working day but … to lengthen it out of personal choice and will' (ibid, p. 79).

What we see in this condition are regimes and conjunctures in which the social, biopolitical and psychic-emotional are productive of, and produced by, economies of labour and capital. In these regimes it becomes harder and harder to distinguish work time from leisure time, private from public, state from corporate and so forth. It has been widely argued (Lazzarato, 1996; Martin, 2002; Virno, 2004; Mitropoulos, 2005; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005; Vanni and Tari, 2005; de Angelis, 2007) that such regimes are now the tendency rather than the exception; a tendency that has seen an increase in creative, networked, informational and innovative forms of labour in Western capitalist systems.

Similarly, over the past several years, great efforts have been made to integrate invention, innovation and creativity into the core of China's economy, inspired by industry developments in the United Kingdom, Australia and the USA. This has witnessed not only shifts in manufacturing and production technologies, but also in forms of labour organisation. In Shanghai a mass workforce has begun to aggregate in the creative and cultural labour sectors, including the arts, design, fashion, advertising and also software development, IT, logistics and service industries. As in Europe, this burgeoning workforce is one predominantly typified by a relatively low labour-to-wage ratio, high contact hours, flexible contracts and spatial fragmentation. It is also one deeply invested in aspirationalism.

The conditions composing, and composed by, these labouring subjects pose many questions for discussions on the self-valorising possibilities for the creative worker in Shanghai, but also more generally. The processes of subjectivation that give rise to this workforce are complex. They are entangled in currents of desire and self-organisation, governance and entrepreneurialism. Within radical European political discourses on such labour configurations, reference is made to a particular trajectory of praxes and concepts predicated on collective and common struggle and agitation, such as strikes and refusals. Regardless of the vastly different historical, geopolitical and cultural context, this traditional assemblage of strategies fails to resonate within Shanghai's creative sectors in similar ways that it fails to resonate within the contemporary West. This common failure, along with the appropriation of affective and inventive sensibilities by the creative sector, both in Europe and Asia, is precisely why conceptual trajectories such as that offered by Berardi become interesting, despite the socio-cultural and political difficulties for translation posed by the Shanghainese context.

Given these difficulties, how might it be possible to think about subjectivation and self-valorisation in contemporary Shanghainese creative and knowledge labour practices? What kinds of social and political compositions might be present in the creative industries from within which to make claims about living and working conditions? How do these navigate the ambivalences thrown up by the importation of Western labour models and discourses? What does it mean for discourses of immaterial and info labour when these mostly singular and minor compositions escape or contradict them? How might we begin to think of vocabularies more sensitised to agitational, messy, aspirational and individuated gestures that are both autonomous and complicit? And how might such theoretical pathways be put to the task of translation in a radically different context?

It is my intention with this article to open a space for consideration and further enquiry into such questions, and not to lay claim to an exhaustive survey or a comprehensive analysis of the current Chinese situation. My objective is to preliminarily look at some of the conditions and desires underpinning creative workers' experiences and aspirations in Shanghai at the present moment, with the hope that this will connect into other analytical research. Much important scholarship has already been done on the creative industries (Hartley, 2005; Rossiter, 2006; Mosco and McKercher, 2008; McKinlay and Smith, 2009; Ross, 2009; Flew and Cunningham, 2010), creative work and industry in China (Wang, 2004; Flew, 2006; Hartley and Keane, 2006; O'Conner and Xin, 2006; Keane, 2007, 2009; Ye, 2008; Pang, 2009) and socio-political analyses of China's post-socialist labour and cultural history (Wang, 2001; Hui, 2003; Chun, 2006; Arrighi, 2007; Ngai and King-Chi Chan, 2008; Kwan Lee and Friedman, 2009; Ngai and Huilin, 2010); for this reason I will not reiterate this material here.

Instead I would like to suggest that discussions of these sectors require re-conceptualisations of vocabularies used to speak about the political registers, which address the opportunistic leverages produced in the spaces of capital without immediately dismantling them as apolitical. This is not to negate the ambivalences of class composition and the privileges associated with the info sectors. But it is to consider some of these experiences from the perspective of what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1986, 1987) refer to as 'becoming-revolutionary' on the local or sub-political level, to look at those 'forms of resistance to subjectification which, in producing novel alliances and connections, are also creative of new possibilities of life, new modes of existence and types of practice' (Armstrong, 2002, p. 49).

Asking Questions: Mappings and Conversations

Even when speaking about open and experimental forms of scholarship such as in calls for new (in this case, anglophonic) vocabularies, the translation of

a conceptual framework tied to a historical geographical, cultural and economic paradigm to another that is radically different may well prove conflictive. One may encounter further criticism when employing discourses that have arisen from European and American intellectual, academic and managerial/policy systems on creative labour, social reproduction and precariousness to look at the rising creative sector in China. Indeed, it has already been noted that creativity in China has a profoundly different connotation to that in Europe (Keane, 2009), and that the notion of the 'creative class' as posited by Florida (2002) does not necessarily help to understand the dynamics of economic development in some Asian cities (Mok, 2006); both observations signal problems to the translation of the creative industries in this way point blank. But it must be emphasised that such attempts at scholarship do not necessarily imply a cultural and intellectual imperialism, and nor should they be polarised through sociological or anthropological tropes of 'authenticity' or 'expertise' in knowledge production.[1] In this case, given the increasing interest in Asian capitalist development and labour organisation from the European university cohort, this kind of uneasy relationship invigorates a questioning – an invitation for reflection and debate – rather than a definitive analysis.

The necessity for such a questioning model is best illustrated through two seemingly unrelated points made by Brett Neilson (2008) and Jing Wang (2001). First, in 'Labour, Migration, Creative Industries, Risk' Neilson comments that when one studies the makeup of the creative industries workforce one simultaneously looks at how subjectivation occurs in an environment depoliticised by the hegemony of economics. He states that asking questions such as 'if the productive power of subjectivity in the creative industries is reduced to the power to produce wealth, what are the terms of this reduction?' opens new avenues of research, specifically with regard to the crucial task of current political enquiry, namely 'the need to reassess and redefine the concept of exploitation under current global conditions' (2008).

Second, Jing Wang, in 'Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital', argues that the traditional dichotomies of socialism versus capitalism, high versus low culture 'are inadequate conceptual tools for our task of capturing the "transitional" or transformational logic at play in contemporary Chinese society' (2001, 69–70). This is because, argues Wang, 'binaries are dissolving' (ibid.).

Together, what these two comments enunciate is the need for analyses that address creative labour systems while negotiating the fetishisation and orientalism risked by much of the current Western academic fascination with China. As Wang critically notes, the prevalent dichotomous mode of thought traps many Marxist dialecticians into believing that they are 'instant China experts' when pitting socialism against capitalism (2001, p. 70). This, however, ignores the complex social, nationalistic and cultural systems at play in contemporary China.

The methods experimented with through 'Transit Labour: Circuits, Regions Borders' (2009–2012) – the larger project through which my research was enabled and contributed to – attempt to navigate (not avoid) these complexities.[2] Adopting a self-reflexive, processual 'platform' method combining sustained online and offline discussions, events and ethnographic and conceptual analysis, in close conjunction with local researchers and institutes embedded in Shanghai, Kolkata and Sydney, the project seeks to investigate the 'changing patterns of labour and mobility in the whirlwind of Asian capitalist transformation' (Transit Labour, 2010).[3] It aims to examine precariousness and mobility in Shanghai, Kolkata and Sydney, with respect to creative labour. Creative labour here does not simply refer to creative and cultural industries, but also to the forms of service and info labour that feed into and enable those fields. Transit Labour thus explores the supply chains and migratory movements that generate creative economies in Asia.

In 2010 I worked with Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter to coordinate the Shanghai platform of the Transit Labour project, and over the 3 months that I spent in Shanghai between March and August I undertook, in collaboration with two local researchers Liu Yi and Cai Ming,[4] interviews with 18 workers and interns in fields such as design, art, advertising and administration/management, as well as in recycling, second-hand electronics and Printed Circuit Board production. Drawing from themes associated with contemporary modes of immaterial labour production, these conversations ranged across issues of organisation and work, remuneration, psycho-somatic effects, bio-politics of welfare and living conditions, tactics of contestation and differential mobilities within cities and regions. Each interview took place in English, Shanghainese and Mandarin and lasted around 1–2 hours. They included broad questions on why the interviewee came to Shanghai, *hukou* (residence permits), work history and background, and migration, as well as more specific questions such as: How do you feel about yourself in this profession? How much of your day do you spend networking and socialising for work? How important is this to your job? Where do people come from that you work with? What kinds of economic, social cultural backgrounds do they predominantly have? What do you do if you have a problem with your working conditions? How do you feel about creating culture for commerce? What impedes/helps your mobility here: your work, living zone, race, class, income, family status and so on? Do you feel that your work impacts on your health/mind/body?

In July 2010, Manuela Zechner and I further initiated a series of conversations with eight young interns, students and workers in media and creative fields through the 'New Media Workers across Asia and Europe: Research Platform for Interregional Collaborations' project. The group that we spoke to, aged between 18 and 24, were all at the early stages of their planned career, having just finished their studies, being about to complete their studies, or recently having entered the job market. Each conversation

was undertaken in English with two participants at a time and lasted up to 2 hours. A method used to open dialogue was a constellation of five graphical mappings.[5] First, a hexagram on which participants were asked to scale their level of fun, learning, income, professional recognition, social value and health in relation to their current occupation. Second, a time budget breaking days/weeks/months into hours spent on sleep, work, transit, computer/phone, collaboration, (self) education, pleasure, eating, friendship, love and care, and at home. Third, a diagram of social relations, based on who participants undertake paid work, unpaid work, celebrations, eating, intimate conversations, and the sharing of resources with. Fourth, a map of Shanghai in which participants were asked to trace out their daily transit rhythms and places they spent time in. And finally a body map, upon which participants were asked to indicate sites on their bodies where they felt tension, pain, wear and tear, touch, excitation and underuse.

These mappings, while recalling social science techniques of data collection, were expressedly oriented towards the facilitation of exchange rather than the collation of quantitative information. The stimulus provided by the maps and diagrams afforded a point of reference that helped to invigorate conversation through questioning and seeking clarification. This allowed for a mode of interaction that was not founded on assumed premises but on a dialogic and open communication without expectation of answers, which may shift depending on the particular conversational constituencies. For some of the young people we engaged they served a quasi-therapeutic function, giving space for reflection on their own past and future processes of subjectivation as students, interns, workers, 'creatives' and as civil and socio-cultural subjects.

What became apparent through the process of the mapping conversations with younger workers and interns and the earlier interviews with mid and later career 'creatives' was that the conditions described by the discourses around cognitive and immaterial labour, working conditions and precariousness, resonated. While the vocabularies employed in Western conceptualisations did not translate seamlessly owing to differences not only in language and communication but also socio-cultural and economic histories, the materialities and sensibilities they spoke to were identified by our interviewees as being shared at the present time within the creative sectors. This was especially true in terms of the psychic, somatic and emotional affects of contemporary labour modes. As one designer, Li Wen, commented to me on 24 March 2010, 'sleep disorders are the illness of the creative worker, it doesn't matter where you are'. In such ways, the expropriation of creative passion, affect and communicational ability by capital, the aspirationalism tied to creative and cultural economies, can be seen to signal points of connection through industry across significant geopolitical, social and cultural terrains.

Creative Labour, Life and Organisation

Western discourses on the reconfiguration of labour and social systems through capitalism have become sensitive to what has been termed by proponents of autonomist theory as the rise in cognitive, info or immaterial labour, typified by the creative and knowledge sectors. According to Maurizio Lazzarato, immaterial labour can be thought of as that which 'produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity' (1996, p. 133);[6] the making of the 'intellect, perception, and linguistic communication as the principle resources of production' (Virno in Costa, 2004). This understanding is taken even further by Berardi when he observes that 'social culture, contrasting imaginaries, expectations, and disappointments, loathing and solitude, all enter to modify the rhythm and pace of the productive process' (2007, pp. 58–59). According to Virno, 'saying that work today has become communicative means that it absorbs the generic human capacities that, until recently, unfolded during time outside of work' (ibid.). What follows then is that through the convergence of labour and 'aesthetic tastes, ethical decisions, affects, and emotions', it becomes ever more difficult to differentiate 'work' from 'leisure', 'producer' from 'consumer', 'public' from 'private' (ibid.).

The ambivalence for Virno lies in the way that intellect, language and emotions now function as the cornerstones of labour systems, as 'productive "machines" ' (2001). Here the general intellect, quite literally 'intellect in general: the faculty and power to think, rather than the works produced by thought [including] formal and informal knowledge, imagination, ethical tendencies, mentalities and "language games" ', has become the central productive attribute of living labour (ibid.). In this sense, writes Virno, the fundamental attitudes of cognition become the possibility for production: language, the capacity to learn, memory, and so forth. What Virno sees in this transfiguration is what he takes from Marx's conception of 'general intellect' in 'Fragment on machines' in the *Grundrisse* (1974); namely the exteriorisation, collectivisation and socialisation associated with intellectual activity when it becomes 'the true mainspring of the production of wealth' (Virno, 2004, p. 38). Virno's ambivalence is underscored by an acute awareness of those opposing directions that can develop out of the public or common intellect, something made very clear in the creative sectors. Because the public or general intellect is the unifying base, these developments have significant consequences. On the one hand it can catalyse a genuine public sphere, a *republic*, 'a political space in which the many can tend to common affairs' through the dissolution of its bond to capitalist modes of production, commodification and the wage labour system (ibid, p. 40). On the other, if it is removed from the public sphere or a political community as such, it can become a conduit for the further manifestation of capitalist massification, of subservience and false reassurance. This is captured perfectly by Virno in his example of the *sharing* of linguistic and cognitive

operations, an attribute that is the lynchpin of much creative work: 'sharing', says Virno 'in one way characterizes "the many", seen as being many, the multitude; in another way it is itself the base of today's production' (ibid, p. 41).

It is within the ambivalence borne by the imbrications of social and capitalist forms of life that it becomes possible to see how Virno critically composes the potentiate elements of such new architectures of the public. Virno writes that these can 'manifest themselves in opposite ways: as servility or as liberty', that is to say, either in 'opportunism, cynicism, the desire to take advantage of the occasion in order to prevail over others', or in 'conflict and insubordination, defection and exodus from the present situation' (in Costa, 2004). The ambivalences described by Virno must be considered in discussions of labouring subjects within contemporary capitalist systems, which need to either find ways to maneuver through them, or translate them into radical intensities, into new ways of organising, relating, being, in the present rather than in some utopian vision of the future. Clearly this poses significant challenges, to which I will later return, especially in the creative fields. Even more challenges arise when we take into account the wider permutations of creative labour into service, logistics and waste sectors, where, as Berardi writes, 'precariousness is no longer a marginal and provisional characteristic, but it is the general form of the labor relation in a productive, digitalized sphere, reticular and recombinative' (2009a, p. 31).

In the creative sectors the precariousness and competitiveness that may accompany the general intellect, the collectivity and mutability of labour power, as well as its decimation of conventional labour roles and contracts, can lead to a silence and aspiration rather than contestation. This is partly because, as Berardi has pointed out, the dislocation of sites and temporalities in which struggle has traditionally assembled. But it is also because, as Gina Neff *et al* emphasise,

> 'Hot' industries and 'cool' jobs not only normalize, they glamorize risk, and the entrepreneurial investment required of individuals seeking those jobs leads to a structural disincentive to exit during difficult economic times. The image of glamorized risk provides support for continued attacks on unionized work and for ever more market-driven, portfolio-based evaluations of workers' value. (2005, p. 331)

This is where the planes of organisation, precariousness, subjectivation and desire intersect and it is precisely at this intersection that class composition becomes problematised in the creative sectors, as I will now show.

The Creative Class in Shanghai

The process of China's industrialisation accelerated with the turn of the twenty-first century. The last decade has seen the advance of a 'new economy'

of creative discourses and industries, perfectly captured by the shift from 'Made in China' to 'Created in China' (Wang, 2004; Hartley and Keane, 2006; O'Conner and Xin, 2006; Carriço *et al*, 2008; Ye, 2008; de Kloet, 2009; Keane, 2009; Pang, 2009). This was in part to do with the increased promotion of non-manufacturing and service sectors in many of the more developed cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, Wuhan, Suzhou, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Changsha and Guangzhou (Keane, 2007; Ye, 2008; IVCA, 2010). Within this shift, creative industries were framed as a means by which to 'upgrade the economic structure' (Li and Zhang, 2008), coinciding with state development of commercial creative industry zones and public spaces (O'Conner and Xin, 2006). The past 10 years have also witnessed an expansion in creative and culturally focused higher education, with hundreds of thousands of students majoring in fields like animation, game design and advertising, aggressively encouraged by the Chinese government. This was supported by positive perceptions of the economic viability of entrepreneurial ventures, towards an ideological conviction of strong Chinese socio-economic growth through what Perry Anderson calls 'the benefits of private enterprise' (2007).

Despite stringent censorship on internet communications by the state, the access to pirated software, peer 2 peer and social networking sites played a large role in the explosion of the creative fields, not only in the distributive capacities for creative talent and marketing, but also in the production, circulation and consumption of creative subcultural life worlds, for instance the independent music and arts, design and fashion industries.[7] This is hardly surprising given the extent to which social networking and online sites function as digital platforms for the constitution of different civil and public communities in China, as both Shubo Li (2010) and Zixue Tai (2006) have argued. According to Lisa Li and Zafka Zhang writing on the blog China Youth Watch, which sells itself as 'catching the pulse of China youth',

> China sees not only a growing supply of creative products/contents but also a huge size of creativity-seekers in the young generation. There's the saying all the artistic youth in China gather on Douban. Whatever 'cool stuff' you are talking about, you are assured to find at least one group on it. (2008)[8]

Obviously there are commonalities in the commodification of social labour regardless of its sites of articulation. Whether in Asia or Europe what is primarily capitalised upon is artistic innovation in the form of imaginative and affective relationalities. This is what drives consumer desire, made visible through social networks and communicative faculties – the becoming labour of language and empathy, as we have seen (Virno, 2004; Berardi, 2009a, b). Michael Keane has noted, however, that while creative fields in the West are imbued with histories and fantasies of the liberated artist and the

transcendence of aesthetics, this is not the case in China (2009). Furthermore, as Wang points out, peculiar also to the development of the cultural and creative fields in China is an intense symbiosis of state and corporate apparatuses (2004). The tension between, on the one hand, mass collective labour and economic expansion and on the other, individuation and self-expression, is also worthy of note given the historical conditions of Chinese socialist labour regimes. These aspects grate against European understandings of creative labour, and antagonise any easy translation of political vocabularies trans-contextually.

Within China, Shanghai is claimed to have 'by far the most ambitious creative industries programme' and as 'the most "Western" city in China on its own admission, is thus set to take the lead in the creative industries' (O'Conner and Xin, 2006, p. 281). As Li Wu Wei and Hua Jian propose, the potential for the creative industries in Shanghai is particularly high for a number of reasons: first, its pre-existing industry infrastructure; second, its 'historical industrial heritage' (2006, p. 168); third, its cultural diversity and mix of Eastern and Western influences; and fourth, its desirability to 'talent' boosted by China's 'open door policy' (ibid.). Unique to Shanghai is also a distinctive combination of 'industrial clustering, government agency promotion, and policy support' (ibid.). The impact of the creative markets has been most clearly evinced by the sharp increase in arts infrastructures: according to a UNESCO report, Shanghai now features the largest territory of creative clusters worldwide, with over 6110 creative enterprises originating from more than 30 countries and regions, employing over 114 700 people (2011). By the end of 2010 the creative industries were expected to be generating around 10 per cent of Shanghai's GDP (Yu, 2007). Given this staggering escalation of the field since its 2005 inception, what is of interest are the new kinds of social assemblages arising from these recent labour constellations, and the modes of organisation and regulation that they have engendered.

The social and class assemblages and subjectivities arising from Shanghai's new creative sector are complex, and there is an uneven distribution of labour, despite a propensity to label creative workers as the burgeoning elite class. First, this is because of the wide array of work and working conditions that fall under the category of 'creative' in China. As Zhang (2007) shows, this ranges from advertising, IT, media and science research to hairdressing, agriculture and textiles. Second, the supply chains consolidating these industries are also imperative to acknowledge. As the Transit Labour project illustrates, this includes the processing and assemblage of raw materials and components, traditionally factory labour, to waste collection and recycling, comprised of both formal and informal economies and structures. The inclusion of service labour to this category is also imperative.

This is what troubles any meta-analysis of the economic and social composition of the living labour that populates innovation and creative work.

Two contrasting perspectives seem to dominate – common to both is an aspirationalist desire. This can be both de-politicising and politicising in unconventional ways, as will later be discussed. On the one hand, as Jing Wang comments,

> the rising 'creative class' … have deep pockets, networking capital with the state, and a lifestyle characteristic of the nouveau riche. Totally indifferent to public issues concerning the truly socially dislocated (i.e. rural migrants) those twenty- and thirty-somethings are a species that even the most enthusiastic advocates of creative industries would find difficult to romanticize. (2004, p. 17)

The stereotype identified by Wang is certainly not exceptional. A brief scan of online materials cites the same glamorous, vertiginously successful lifestyle criticised by Wang (Chen, 2007; Keenlyside, 2008; Fringe Shanghai, 2010; Tian, 2010). What must be acknowledged with regard to this stereotype, furthermore, is its connection to the expatriate community, which comprises in large part the management hierarchy and contributes to the unevenness in labour and economic distribution. The influx of Western and more broadly transnational businesses and entrepreneurs, and the workforce comprising the professional classes, impacts the shaping of aspirations of young people for hyper-consumer capitalist culture.

On the other hand, a number of the young Chinese creatives we spoke with described their background, and those of their friends and peers, as working or middle class, often migrating from rural territories either with their families or alone for the pursuance of higher education. This is obviously not to suggest that all of those within the creative sectors come from working-class demographics, but simply to note that each industry contains diversities that cannot be easily homogenised. Many of the young workers we spoke to articulated a struggle within the job market, both their own and their peers, and an apprehension around future job security. On a national scale, this seeming precariousness is supported by the growing awareness (Agencies, 2010; Crowley, 2010; Jennings, 2010; Madariaga, 2010) of what has been termed 'ant tribes': the flexible and low-waged aggregation of young graduates without job contracts or social security living in highly condensed diasporas on the metropolitan outskirts. Similarly, there has been documentation of factory labour in Chinese provinces, such as Dafen, where the manufacture and mass production of aesthetic objects occur (Paetsch, 2006). In a telling gesture one graduate from the prestigious Peking University even posted on the Chinese Ganji (online used goods trading website) 'I am willing to sell my Peking University diploma for one yuan'. According to Paolo Do, this was because since 2003 the graduate had not found employment paying more than 1500 yuan per month, less than that offered for much unqualified work (2010).

  1755-6341 **Subjectivity** Vol. 5, 1, 54–74

From these contrasting perspectives it is hardly surprising that Pang cautions that it is necessary to address the complexities within the constituencies of the creative fields and to understand such complexity as 'politically confounding because it constantly incorporates and interjects different kinds of labor and different ways of thinking, although it also means that workers are exposed to exploitation on different fronts' (2009, p. 72). The composition of this workforce from a socio-economic standpoint is even more layered when one takes into account China's national history over the latter half of the twentieth century. Chris Connery proposed during an interview on 3 August 2010 that the broad sweep of Chairman Mao's cultural revolution and the attempted rehabilitation of the bourgeoisie meant that class composition was fundamentally altered, thus making the tracing out of class history one that needs to refer back to serial generations rather than only to the most recent. As Yanjie Bian (2002) asserts, the post-1978 reforms under Deng Xiaoping led to an evolving class system, the effects of which may contribute to the searching out for a different kind of relationship to social and familial reproduction, and capitalist accumulation by the younger generations.

The composition of this labour force must be seen from within this history, but without negating present labour conditions that inherently challenge conventional Marxist conceptions of class constitution and the international division of labour.[9] The determined aspiration and idealism – along with cultural narratives around knowledge, experience and work – that underpins young worker's 'acceptance' of unsatisfactory labour situations must not be necessarily dismissed as a de-politicisation through privilege and elitism. This is not to deny ongoing inequality, class analysis and conflict in China, especially between rural and metropolitan regions as Pun Ngai and Chris King-Chi Chan (2008) emphasise. Nor is it to undermine the recognition of a rising elite in such creative and innovative sectors, to deny the commercial and capital potential in these industries, or to negate the class privilege inherent to education. Rather it is to acknowledge the wide disparities and complex array of material conditions and wages within the sector that complicate readings of class formation.

Reconsidering Politics and Organisation

Widespread and collective labour disputes are still common in China. The early half of 2010 especially attracted global media attention with high-profile struggles at foreign-owned factories in China's southeast provinces, for instance the suicides at consumer electronics factories such as Foxconn, and strikes at Honda auto plants. As Ngai and King-Chi Chan (2008), Ngai and Huilin (2010), and Ching Kwan Lee (2007) have shown, labour unrest is particularly strong in manufacturing, textile and agricultural industries with a large rural

migrant workforce. This is the face of migrant determination most visibly associated with worker organisation. In the creative techno-social fields, however, there is little political volatility, which makes it understandable that scholars concentrate on the more established registers of political articulation by the exploited working and peasant classes than the seemingly manageable conditions of 'middle-class' creative workers.

Given the ostensible lack of self-organisation within the creative fields in Shanghai, once described to me as a politically conservative wasteland, why is it interesting to speak about young workers in these fields when there are more prolific and obvious sites of contestation elsewhere? To my mind there are two primary reasons. First, if, as the Transit Labour project does, we take into account the chains of labour feeding into and fed into by the creative sectors, we see a much more complex constellation of labour fields. Second, if we examine actual material conditions, we recognise that a significant number of these creative workers fall into the 40 per cent of the urban workforce who are 'self-employed, part-time, temporary and casual' and who possess 'little bargaining power' (Kwan Lee and Friedman, 2009, p. 22).

It is also not surprising that this workforce, whether in China or elsewhere, confounds the conventional strategies of self-organisation and hence visibility, a crucial point connecting to Virno's conceptualisations of radical publics and the ambivalences associated with the capitalisation of the 'general intellect'. The challenges confronting self-organisation in these fields in China are not dissimilar to those in Europe. There is no framework for unionisation in the independent and freelance creative workforce, and in areas where there is a salaried system, for instance advertising or design, there appears to be minimal desire for union participation, in part owing to the collusion of trade unions and the Communist government. This lack of framework may have informed the tone of responses given in Shanghai around the possibilities for collective forms of action. When asked 'what would a strike mean to you' during an interview on the 24 March 2010, Li Wen, a graphic designer and artist, responded,

> there is no strike here, so if you are on strike you are like, hey sorry I cannot do that, and you end up probably like the clients say fuck you there's tonnes of people that we can ask for, so that's the problem I think there's no work unit and those kinds of concepts here.

The fragmentation spoken of by Li was echoed across the interview spectrum. Similarly this was reflected in the unanimous puzzlement over popular European forms of occupation and appropriation, which had in the United Kingdom and Germany resurged over the past years within political creative networks.

Another Shanghai-based artist, Huang Zhi, during an interview on 19 March 2010 recounted an event that had occurred in February 2010 in Beijing, which

  1755-6341 **Subjectivity** Vol. 5, 1, 54–74

to him resonated the most with such practices. He explained that a few years back an artist's village had been established on a long-term contract of 5–10 years. After a period of 1 or 2 years the artists were served with eviction papers. The artists, having invested much time and energy in the space, refused to leave. The owners responded by cutting off power and water for 4 months during the winter. The artist was unsure whether many of the artists were actually inhabiting the premises, but did know that they spent a considerable amount of time there. Through this experience they were, he said, united. One night around 200 organised thugs came to the premises and attacked the artists. Some of them were badly injured. One of China's most prolific and outspoken artists Ai Weiwei then organised a march on Tiananmen Square, which was interrupted by police. The march had the effect, however, that attention was drawn to the crime and the thugs were arrested. The artists were also compensated in the sense that they received funds to move out of the studios.

'This', commented Huang 'is a protest basically, it's not a strike right but this is something'. He then went on to talk about a website where artists design logos for competitive auction, getting paid between 100 and 500 RMB per design. What this illustrated for him was the combination of fierce individualisation and atomisation, cheap labour and self-exploitation that nullified the possibilities for collective action on an everyday level. 'Maybe strike is not working here', he concluded, 'there's no strike concept because they don't care about strike, but I think it would be great if there was a service or organisation that can deal with these issues'.

From conversations with several creative practitioners in Shanghai, it seemed that despite, or perhaps because of, the infrastructural degeneration of Beijing's arts scene, it maintained a greater renown for the kinds of radical assemblages more recognised from a European perspective. What also became clear was that it was commonly held that Shanghai itself lacked a critical political consciousness. At the same time, however, some arts practitioners were far more ambivalent. One instigator of the self-organised creative space Xindanwei – a Shanghai collective 'workspace' and meeting place for independent and freelance creative workers (Xindanwei, 2010) – Ling Ya, pinpointed this so-called political lack as something deeply historical and structural. She highlighted the problems of a direct translation or comparison with Western systems, stating during our interview on 12 March 2010,

> I wouldn't say that Shanghai is politically indifferent, it's just those people compared to the West are still quite small. I mean this is quite normal when you have a country that's been censored for a long time and has a planned economy and people don't really have too much of a sense of expressing ideas, but it's coming, definitely. If you check twitter you have many followers from Shanghai and every day they are talking about politics.

This consideration is not omitted by Wang though, who also reflects 'how do we begin to envision a … discussion of something like creative industries in a country where creative imagination and content are subjugated to active state surveillance?' (2004, p. 17). The issue raised by both Ling and Wang here is central as it lays bare this symbiosis of state, capital and creativity so prevalent in China and especially in Shanghai, which antagonises Eurocentric vocabularies of self-valorisation and refusal. The Xindanwei space, for instance, describes itself as self-organised and makes associative claims to underground activism. At the same time it maintains a biometric access system and defines itself as a social enterprise, a socially driven organisation that uses market strategies and structures to achieve a social goal. Ling was candid about its operation. When we asked about the intersections between culture and commerce, she recounted a story concerning the model of organisation they desired. 'A meeting', she told us 'was held with supporters of the space to gauge their opinions. Half of the group recommended the discourse around co-working and collaboration be dropped to limit confusion in favour of positioning the space as a service or business centre. The other half recognised the 'competitive advantage' of the space being its uniqueness and its distinction from conventional models. 'This difference', she continued, 'is what allows Xindanwei to fill a niche in the market, because such spaces are almost non-existent in Shanghai and this is why it attracts interesting discussion and debate not found elsewhere'.

The ways in which politics and organisation, as well as subjectivation, are conceived of and play out in these scenarios speaks directly to the ambivalences at the heart of Virno's conceptions of the general intellect and the possibilities for radical publics (Virno, 2004). In China, with its long history of enforced socialism and collectivism, the importation of Western ideals of collaboration and creativity is a tense one, as our conversations with Chris Connery and Chen Hangfeng edify (Kanngieser and Zechner, 2010). For Virno the putting to work of creativity and communication, of social relations, can lead to either servitude or emancipation. For the creative workers we spoke to, perhaps because of the current permutation of capitalist socialism, the trajectory of 'opportunism, cynicism, the desire to take advantage of the occasion in order to prevail over others' intersects and infects that of 'conflict and insubordination, defection and exodus from the present situation' (Virno in Costa, 2004). What this means for any engagement with the refrain of 'what is to be done?' today is the need for an acute sensitivity to the complexities and gradations in the composition, strategies and self-conceptualisations of the so-called creative class, especially one with a history like that in China.

Conclusion

To emphasise this final conjecture: the majority of creative workers that we spoke to described themselves as politically engaged. Given the events recounted

here, what kinds of social and organisational assemblages are occurring in these fields? How do these navigate the ambivalences thrown up by the importation of Western labour models and discourses? The intense capitalisation of social, linguistic and affective relations means self-organisation and self-governance are mechanisms for both autonomy and complicity. In China where the state colludes so thoroughly with capital, the scene is even more fraught. If the above situations sit awkwardly within our formulations of political criticality, do they become void? Where might we see potential in ambivalence? Is there a way to read aspiration beyond capitalist accumulation? And how might we begin to think of vocabularies more receptive to agitational, messy, aspirational and individuated gestures that are both autonomous and complicit? These are but some of the questions that need to be asked when considering the modes of subjectivation producing, and produced by, China's creative, knowledge and innovative workers.

In asking such questions in this article, I have framed and proposed the conditions of creative labour in terms of the conflicts and connections that are produced through, and produce, what has been identified by Virno, Berardi and others as the colonisation of the social and biopolitical realms by capital and labour. I want to stress this aspect of conflict and ambivalence. In doing so, I emphasise that rather than fully rest on the point, as Berardi does, that what is inevitable is a depressive phase, in which 'hope can only come from suicides' (2009a, p. 55) we might also consider the less visible or less recognisable gestures of self-valorisation and opportunistic leverages produced – despite the spaces of capital – by affective relations, which may require new vocabularies for their enunciation.

What is required are new ways to observe and articulate emerging social and labour mobilisations from perspectives that accommodate the microcosms of the everyday and that traverse macro-political, visible, common expressions, paying attention to those sites usually forgotten or dismissed by political activisms. At the same time, the multiplication of autonomies and complicities through the multiplication of different kinds of labouring roles and subjects need to be accounted for. So do the difficulties these entail, for instance the appropriation of self-organisation by capital, and a willing absorption of technologies of valorisation into all spheres of social and bio-political life.

About the Author

Anja Kanngieser is a cultural geographer, communications scholar and self-taught radio maker working at the intersections of labour self-organisation, migration, radical politics, the voice and radio. She is the author of *Creative Experiments in Making Worlds* (forthcoming 2013), http://transversalgeographies.org/.

Notes

1 There have been, in recent years, new considerations of what comprises ethnographic method; especially interesting are the debates coming from George Marcus's (2008) comment that recent ethnography has produced 'no new ideas'. Scholars such as Maximilian Forte (2008) contest that such proclamations ignore 'new forms of doing, producing, and writing ethnography, especially with reference to cyberspace ethnography'. Furthermore, anthropologists of distributed phenomena such as Christopher Kelty (2008) argue that the breadth of study need not negate its depth. Such debates feed into the understandings of contemporary ethnography taken up by the Transit Labour project. For more on this see Kanngieser *et al* (forthcoming).

2 The Transit Labour project comes from the ARC Discovery Grant funded project 'Culture in Transition: Creative Labour and Social Mobilities in the Asian Century'. Departing from much of the recent China-oriented scholarship, Brett Neilson *et al* (2010) write that Transit Labour's 'initiation of research in China is not part of a search for alternative modernities that articulate post-war geocultural visions', but rather seeks to 'attend to the multiple processes of bordering that internally divide and connect the continent to wider and differentially scaled circuits of labour, capital, technology, culture and life' (2010, pp. 1–2). By exploring conflictive and complicit conjunctures, it becomes less about opposing geographical regions and more about the intersections of logistics, labour, governance and subjectivation.

3 For a list of participants see http://transitlabour.asia/shanghai/. Research partners on the project include Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney, University of Nottingham, Ningbo, Lingnan University, Dipartimento di Politica, Istituzioni, Storia, Universita di Bologna, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group and Tsinghua University.

4 All names of interviewees and Shanghainese collaborators have been changed or omitted to protect anonymity. This is necessarily because of very actual instances of political and cultural repression.

5 For maps see http://transitlabour.asia/blogs/Mapping_Shanghai.

6 While this labour still 'involves our bodies and brains as all labour does', the products of this labour, rather than the labour itself, have become immaterial (Hardt and Negri, 2005, p. 109). At the same time, as Berardi explains, while cognitive activity and intelligence has always been at the heart of human production, whether mechanical, agricultural, artisan or reproductive, in the contemporary scenario, cognitive capacity has become the central resource. 'Today', writes Berardi, 'the mind is at work in so many innovations, languages and communicative relations' (2009a, p. 34).

7 Issues of intellectual property, piracy and counterfeiting also need to be mentioned here, especially given the massive hardware and software production industry in China, an industry fraught with labour unrest and exploitation of workers. The new regulations in China requiring tech firms to submit proprietary information (algorithms, source codes, design information) to government agencies are reconfiguring not only where such products are designed and assembled, but also how the economies around innovation are distributed. Ongoing issues around hacking and censorship in China, seen most dramatically in the recent Google relocation of its Chinese servers to Hong Kong, illustrate some of the conflicts being faced in this negotiation between economics and securitisation. Because this text is necessarily limited in its focus I do not have the space to extrapolate this theme here, but scholars such as Cheung (2009), Nie (2006), Keane and Montgomery (2006) and Zhang (2006) further discuss these issues.

8 Douban is one of the largest online communities in China with about 10 million registered users, as of late 2009.

9 Extensive research has yet to be done on what affect the socialist history of enforced collectivism has had in terms of new collective and collaborative modes of labour and whether this makes out a significant deviation from ideas of collectivism in European creative sectors. These themes were addressed during our conversation with Chen Hangfeng and Chris Connery, see Kanngieser and Zechner, 2010.

References

Agencies. (2010) Young college graduates toil in ant 'tribes'. *People Daily* 28 June, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/7042410.html, accessed 12 September.

Anderson, P. (2007) Jottings on the conjecture. *New Left Review* 48, http://newleftreview.org/?view=2695, accessed 4 August 2010.

Armstrong, A. (2002) Agency reconfigured: Narrative continuities and connective transformations. *Contretemps* 3: 42–53.

Arrighi, G. (2007) States, markets, and capitalism, East and West. *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 15(2): 251–284.

Berardi, F. (2005) Biopolitics and connective mutation. *Culture Machine 7*, http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/viewArticle/27/34, accessed 2 May 2006.

Berardi, F. (2007) Technology and knowledge in a universe of indetermination. Trans. G. Mecchia *SubStance* 36(1): 57–74.

Berardi, B. (2009a) *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-alpha Generation*, In: E. Empson and S. Shukaitis (eds.), Translated by A. Bove, E. Empson, M. Goddard, G. Mecchia, A. Schintu and S. Wright. London: Minor Compositions.

Berardi, B. (2009b) *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).

Bian, Y. (2002) Chinese social stratification and social mobility. *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 91–116.

Carriço, M., de Muynck, B. and Rossiter, N. (eds.) (2008) *Urban China: Counter-mapping the Creative Industries*, http://orgnets.net/publications/urban_china/contents, accessed 1 February 2010.

Chen, A. (2007) The next cultural revolution. *Fast Company* 1 June, http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/116/features-the-next-cultural-revolution.html, accessed 3 November 2010.

Cheung, G.C.K. (2009) *Intellectual Property Rights in China: Politics of Piracy, Trade and Protection*. London: Routledge.

Chun, L. (2006) *The Transformation of Chinese Socialism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Costa, F. (2004) *'Between Dsobedience and Exodus' Interview with Paolo Virno*, Translated by N. Holdren. *Generation Online*, http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpvirno5.htm, accessed 6 May 2005.

Crowley, V. (2010) (Re)producing gender: The ant tribe. Women in and Beyond, 10 March, http://www.womeninandbeyond.org/?p=627, accessed 21 March.

de Angelis, M. (2007) *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital*. London, Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto.

de Kloet, J. (2009) Abandoned factories, artistic fantasies: Creative labour and urbanity in a 'new' China. Department of Media Studies, University of Amsterdam: Paper for ASSR staff seminar, 10 November.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1986) *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Translated by D. Polan. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Translated by B. Massumi. London: Athlone Press.

Do, P. (2010) Take back our future. Living Knowledge, 27 October, http://livingknowledge.net/2010/10/27/take-back-our-future/, accessed 28 October.

Flew, T. (2006) The new middle class meets the creative class: The Masters of Business Administration (MBA) and creative innovation in 21st-century China. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 9(3): 419–429.

Flew, T. and Cunningham, S. (2010) Creative industries after the first decade of debate. *The Information Society* 26(2): 113–123.

Florida, R. (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books.

Forte, M. (2008) George Marcus: 'No New Ideas' (2.0) and the After-life of anthropology (1.1). Zero Anthropology, 4 April, http://zeroanthropology.net/2008/04/04/george-marcus-no-new-ideas/, accessed 4 July 2011.

Fringe Shanghai. (2010) http://www.fringeshanghai.com/guanyuyisuishuangzhou-e.htm, accessed 3 November.

Hardt, M. and Negri, A. (2005) *Multitude: War and Democracy in an Age of Empire*. London: Penguin Books.

Hartley, J. (ed.) (2005) *Creative Industries*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Hartley, J. and Keane, M. (2006) Creative industries and innovation in China. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 9(3): 259–262.

Hui, W. (2003) *China's New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition*, In: T. Huters (ed.) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

IVCA. (2010) The Creative Industries in China. *Report*, March, http://www.ivca.org/ivca/live/news/2010/develop-your-business-in-china-join-the-ivca-trade-mission-to-shanghai/IVCA_Report_-_The_Creative_Industries_in_China.pdf, accessed 15 May.

Jennings, R. (2010) China's 'ant tribe' poses policy challenge for Beijing. *The Star* 18 February, http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/2/18/worldupdates/2010-02-18T055227Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-462560-1&sec=Worldupdates, accessed 21 March.

Kanngieser, A., Neilson, B. and Rossiter, N. (forthcoming) Platform as method. In: B. Winter and K. Grewal (eds.) *Transcultural Mappings: Re-interrogating the National in the Context of the Global*. London: Routledge.

Kanngieser, A. and Zechner, M. (2010) Interview with Chris Connery and Chen Hangfeng. *Transit Labour* 8 July, http://transitlabour.asia/blogs/future, accessed 6 October.

Keane, M. (2007) *Created in China: The Great New Leap Forward*. New York: Routledge.

Keane, M. (2009) Creative industries in China: Four perspectives on social transformation. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 15(4): 431–443.

Keane, M. and Montgomery, L. (2006) Learning to love the market: Copyright, culture, and China. In: P.N. Thomas and J. Servaes (eds.) *Intellectual Property Rights and Communications in Asia: Conflicting Traditions*. New Delhi, India and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications India.

Keenlyside, S. (2008) Shanghai surprise. *Telegraph* 9 March, http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/news-features/TMG3364733/Shanghai-surprise.html, accessed 21 March 2010.

Kelty, C. (2008) *Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Kwan Lee, C. (2007) *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Kwan Lee, C. and Friedman, E. (2009) The labor movement. *Journal of Democracy* 20(3): 21–24.

Lazzarato, M. (1996) Immaterial labour. In: P. Virno and M. Hardt (eds.) *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Li, L. and Zhang, Z. (2008) Creative industry and 'creative generation' in China. *China Youth Watch* 10 November, http://chinayouthology.com/blog/?p=355, accessed 12 January 2010.

Li, S. (2010) The online public space and popular ethos in China. *Media Culture Society* 32(1): 63–83.

Madariaga, J. (2010) Ant tribe: Sociology with Chinese characteristics. *Chinayouren* 22 March, http://chinayouren.com/en/2010/03/22/3305, accessed 12 September.

Marcus, G. (2008) The end(s) of ethnography: Social/cultural anthropology's signature form of producing knowledge in transition. *Cultural Anthropology* 23(1): 1–14.

Martin, R. (2002) *The Financialization of Daily Life*. Philadephia, PA: Temple University Press.

Marx, K. (1974) *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*. Virginia, PA: The Dietz Press.

McKinlay, A. and Smith, C. (eds.) (2009) *Creative Labour: Working in the Creative Industries*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mitropoulos, A. (2005) Precari-us? *Republicart*, http://www.republicart.net/disc/precariat/mitropoulos01_en.htm, accessed 18 October 2006.

Mok, P. (2006) Asian cities and limits to creative capital theory. In: L. Kong and J. O'Connor (eds.) *Creative Economies, Creative Cities: Asian-European Perspectives*. New York: Springer.

Mosco, V. and McKercher, C. (2008) *The Laboring of Communication: Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite?* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Neff, G., Wissinger, E. and Zukin, S. (2005) Entrepreneurial labor among cultural producers: 'Cool' jobs in 'hot' industries. *Social Semiotics* 15(3): 307–334.

Neilson, B. (2008) Labour, migration, creative industries, risk. In: N. Rossiter, B. de Muynck, M. Carriço (eds.) *Urban China: Counter-mapping the Creative Industries*, http://orgnets.net/urban_china/neilson, accessed 4 August 2010.

Neilson, B. and Rossiter, N. (2005) From precarity to precariousness and back again: Labour, life and unstable networks. *Fibreculture* 5, http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue5/neilson_rossiter.html, accessed 17 September 2006.

Neilson, B., Rossiter, N. and Zehle, S. (2010) From flows of culture to the circuits of logistics: Borders, regions, labour in transit. In: K. Craig, B. Neilson, N. Rossiter, S. Zehle (eds.) *Transit Labour: Circuits, Regions, Borders Digest 2*. Sydney: Blood and Thunder Publishing Concern.

Ngai, P. and Huilin, H. (2010) Unfinished proletarianization: Self, anger, and class action among the second generation of peasant-workers in present-day China. *Modern China* 36(5): 493–519.

Ngai, P. and King-Chi Chan, C. (2008) The subsumption of class discourse in China. *Boundary* 2(35): 75–91.

Nie, J. (2006) *The Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights in China*. London: Cameron May.

O'Conner, J. and Xin, G. (2006) A new modernity? The arrival of 'creative industries in China'. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 9(3): 271–283.

Paetsch, M. (2006) China's art factories: Van Gogh from the sweatshop. *Spiegel Online*, 23 August, http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,433134,00.html, accessed 1 February 2010.

Pang, L. (2009) The labor factor in the creative economy: A Marxist reading. *Social Text* 27(2): 55–76.

Ross, A. (2009) *Nice Work if You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times*. New York: New York University Press.

Rossiter, N. (2006) *Organized Networks: Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

Tai, Z. (2006) *The Internet in China: Cyberspace and Civil Society*. New York: Routledge.

Tian, G. (2010) Enter the dragonfly. *China Daily* 16 August, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/life/2010-08/16/content_11158869.htm, accessed 12 September 2010.

Transit Labour. (2010) About, http://transitlabour.asia/about/, accessed 27 July.

UNESCO. (2011) 10 things to know about Shanghai: UNESCO city of design, unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001917/191772e.pdf, accessed 8 June 2011.

Vanni, I. and Tari, M. (2005) The life and deeds of San Precario, patron saint of precarious workers and lives. *Fibreculture 5*, http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue5/vanni_tari.html, accessed 6 June 2006.

Virno, P. (2001) General intellect. Translated by A. Bove. Generation Online, http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpvirno10.htm, accessed 22 September 2007.

Virno, P. (2004) *A Grammar of the Multitude*. Los Angeles, CA, New York: Semiotext(e).

Wang, J. (2001) Culture as leisure and culture as capital. *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 9(1): 69–104.

Wang, J. (2004) The global reach of a new discourse: How far can 'creative industries' travel? *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 7(1): 9–19.

Wei, L.W. and Jian, H. (2006) Shanghai's emergence in the global creative economy. In: L. Kong and J. O'Connor (eds.) *Creative Economies, Creative Cities: Asian-European Perspectives*. New York: Springer.

Xindanwei. (2010) About, http://xindanwei.com/, accessed 15 July 2010.

Ye, Z. (2008) China's creative industries: Clusters and performances. Cambridge University: Annual Conference of the Chinese Economist Association.

Yu, J. (2007) Creative industries in Shanghai turn to abandoned industries. *HKTDC*, 6 February, http://www.hktdc.com/info/mi/a/imn/en/1X005I6C/1/International-Market-News/Creative-Industries-In-Shanghai-Turn-To-Abandoned-Industries.htm, accessed 2 March 2010.

Zhang, J. (2007) *Development of Creative Industries in China*. Beijing: China's Economy Publishing.

Zhang, Y. (2006) China's efforts for international cooperation in copyright protection. In: P.N. Thomas and J. Servaes (eds.) *Intellectual Property Rights and Communications in Asia: Conflicting Traditions*. New Delhi, India and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications India.