The Story and the Data: Entrepreneurship in Creative Economy Reports

Arts, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation Lab

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Abstract

The creative economy is touted as an engine for economic prosperity and social good in urban areas. Many cities have produced reports on the promises of the creative economy, yet few analyses of the policy implications from these reports exist. This research explores five creative economy reports using the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) through an iterative coding framework. This research study focuses on the question "How do creative economy reports construct an image of entrepreneurship in the arts and creative industries as an engine for economic development?" with specific focus on policy recommendations and implications.

Introduction

The creative economy has become an engine for economic prosperity and social good in urban areas. This field has gained attention worldwide as a tool for municipal policymakers to foster city building. Creative economy reports are used to make the case that a city is an economic engine. There have been few attempts to analyze these urban creative economy reports and their policy implications. This research examines creative economy reports of five different cities over three continents: London, New York, Chicago, Austin, and Adelaide. As of 2014, more than fifty percent of the world's population lived in urban areas. It is predicted that by 2050 that number will increase to two-thirds. The urban public views the artists in their communities as assets who contribute to community problem-solving, collaborators, and as voices promoting community causes.

Theory

Instituting successful policy change by driving arts and cultural institutions requires the successful integration of both hard and soft factors to promote sustainable creative districts. Private, public, and non-profit leaders can unify with the common goal of incorporating creativity and innovation as a tool for city building. Cities produce Creative City Reports to, among other things, operationalize the data and measure the creative sector, supporting the ideology of the arts arena as the economic engine of urban areas.

Methods

This research examines creative economy reports using the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) through an iterative coding framework. This policy framework, which allows for an analysis of strategies embedded within discourse, resulted in the development of codes for two data sets: 1) Characteristics of the story: the setting, characters, plot, outcomes and moral of the story 2) the quantitative data of the reports. The research centers the ways that creative economy reports use rhetorical devices and empirical data to support their claims and recommendations, as well as forwards policy learning and adaptation as an important tool for municipal policymakers.

"How do creative economy reports construct an image of entrepreneurship in the arts and creative industries as an engine for economic development?"

Findings

Each of the creative economy reports makes claims and arguments about the assets and needs of the city, supporting their claims with evidence in narrative form and/or with data about their city. However, the specific framing of the creative economy varied by city, with two emergent themes: the promise of the creative economy and measuring the creative economy. Some narratives presented a rhetorical narrative strategy that depicted hero vs villain, or assets and problems. The hero factors of the narratives seemed to be a key in promoting a city as a place that is equipped to meet the challenges of creating and maintaining a creative economy. The plots of the narratives conformed mainly to focus on entrepreneurship and economic development. The final outcomes clearly establish the link between entrepreneurial action, artists, and the creative economy to bolster municipal economic development. The authors found that the reports relied heavily on citations from other creative city reports and other literature to support their claims and recommendations.

Discussion

This research mobilizes Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) to examine how creative city reports use rhetorical devices and empirical data to establish a link between entrepreneurship, artists, creative economies, and municipal economic development. They find that narrative rhetorical devices build a clear path for analyzing the structure of cities' arguments regarding their potential to attract and maintain a creative economy, as well as the potential policy implications. The reports that use narrative structure and end on policy

recommendations mobilize evidence and end on clear outcomes, while the reports that rely primarily on data and do not make policy recommendations leave the data to tell the story. These reports rely on presenting a clear account of the facts as the key strategy for drawing conclusions about the creative economy in the report's municipal context.

Conclusion

This study is meant to serve as an inductive beginning for applying NPF to cultural policy and incorporating the literature on narrative in entrepreneurship to the municipal level. Clear strategies based upon policy learning are essential in ensuring that the reports provide worthwhile content. Involving powerful multi-sector stakeholders in the creation and dissemination of the reports, together with the provision of actionable cultural policy solutions, will ensure that the reports do not become documents that are shelved and ignored. Policy development reflects a society and at the same time works to set the agenda for change. Understanding the setting, actors, plot, and preferred policy outcome of creative economy initiatives can provide a valuable roadmap for substantive change. The alignment of data, narrative, and policy strategies can combine to offer an effective tool with which to leverage the power of the creative sector and continue to realize both its economic power and public good promise.

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Dr. Shoshanah Goldberg-Miller is Assistant Professor of Arts Policy and Administration and Affiliated Assistant Professor of City and Regional Planning at The Ohio State University. Her book, *Planning for a City of Culture: Creative Urbanism in Toronto and New York* (Routledge 2017) uses policy theory as an underlying construct to understand the role of arts and culture in urban transformation and revitalization. Dr. Goldberg-Miller has published articles in *Journal of Urbanism, City, Culture and Society, Cities, Artivate,* and *Journal of Enterprising Culture*.

Dr. Rachel Skaggs is the Lawrence and Isabel Barnett Assistant Professor of Arts Management at The Ohio State University. Her research has focused on topics such as the importance of social networks in arts careers, arts entrepreneurship, how artists deal with rejection and failure, and public perceptions of artists in local communities.

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