Abstract

In recent years, Chinese national and municipal governments have emphasised growth of the urban cultural economy, aiming to achieve 15–20% economic output share in the largest metropolitan regions by 2020. There is wide variation in policy and physical approaches to growing the urban cultural economy, explored in Beijing, Shanghai and Foshan. Differing physical models of cultural economic development are explored: formal arts facilities, cultural preservation based redevelopment, high-tech creative zones and bottom-up clusters. Key drivers are discussed and tensions are explored – between production and consumption spaces, top-down and bottom-up approaches and between authenticity and gentrification. The authors conclude the sector is becoming a major shaper of physical form, affirm the key role the private sector has played and assert that bottom-up districts, driven by the producers themselves, have been among the most successful. Spatial dynamism is emphasised, particularly the emergence of new cultural production spaces on the urban periphery, and the evolution in the urban core of former production spaces into new cultural consumption environments.

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