



# Affective Labor, Creative Life and the Condition of Cognitive Capitalism: Considering Creative Industries in Japan

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The term 'creative' or 'creativity' is often used not only in art and culture but also in education and even in business in Japan today. In this paper, firstly I would like to examine the way in which the idea of the creative industries have developed over the last two decades and expanded as a category in Japan. Secondly, I would like to critically discuss the ideology of creativity in the new capitalist economy by looking at government and business discourse in Japan. Through these investigations, I would like to look at problems of working conditions in the creative industries.

**Keywords** Creativity, Creative Industries, Creative Class, Labor, Society of Control

## I. The Age of Creative Industries?

The term 'creative' or 'creativity' is often used not only in art and culture but also in education and even in business in Japan today. In 2017, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) in Japan organized a research project with Mitsubishi Research the Institute (MRI) entitled 'Research on Creativity in the 4th Industrial Revolution (or Industry 4.0)', which used the terms 'design' and 'creativity' in an extensive way and defined them in a much broader sense than usual. According to their argument, in the world of Industry 4.0 and following the third Industrial Revolution, the term design refers not only to artistic design, such as graphic, industrial user interface or architectural design but also to designs of users' experiences, designs of whole products and services or even the design of business models and business eco-systems. While the third Industrial Revolution was initiated by information technology, in particular, by computers and the Internet, the fourth revolution which we are now facing is led by new technological developments in automation (carried out

in smart factories); data exchange in cyber physical systems; the Internet of the Things (IoT); Artificial Intelligence (AI); cloud computing; and cognitive computing based on creativity. In a period when most goods and services are produced by and in non-human technological networks and systems, it is suggested that only creativity is able to produce 'differences' that can successfully compete with rivals.

It is still doubtful whether Industry 4.0 could be called a 'revolution' or not, but it is clear that the whole industry is being re-organized around the crucial concept of art and culture; for instance, with design and creativity. There is a clear shift in the terminology used. This is a shift from the use of cold data and information to more humanistic and artistic creativity; and from the use of science engineering to the use of art and culture. In the METI research project above, the government attempted to introduce a valuation based mode of creativity to evaluate corporations' business potential in the future. Creativity is now seen as a significant resource for business success: the creative industries are the new dominant model of entire business industries.

However, the term creativity still remains vague. It is true that creative industries are expanding in developed countries, but it is still unclear to what extent creative activities—often called affective labor—are seen as an actual form of labor as they have inevitably blurred the distinction between work and leisure. The extent to which creativity is needed in conventional industries in developed countries is questionable. Creative industries are made possible only through the strict division of labor between developed countries and developing countries. The term 'creativity' is often used as means to justify the exploitation of young people as an ideological product in the latest stage of capitalism; that is, the stage taking place in the age of neoliberalism and globalization.

In this paper, firstly I would like to examine the way in which the creative industries have developed over the last two decades and expanded as a category in Japan. Secondly, I would like to critically discuss the ideology of creativity in the new capitalist economy. Through these investigations, I would like to look at problems of working conditions in the creative industries.

## II. The Creative Industry in Japan: from METI's Industrial Promotion Policy Perspective

The term 'creative industries' is not very new: it has already had an over twenty-year history. It was initially used in Australia in the late 1990s and then spread to the UK and the US (Howkins, 2008: 118). The term became globally recognized when the Prime Minister in the UK, Tony Blair, started to use it as a core concept in his 'Cool Britannia' cultural policy in 1997. The 'Cool Britannia' policy, as outlined in 'The Creative Industries Mapping Document 1998' issued by the UK's Department of Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) has been influential in cultural policy-making in many countries.

It would be good to look at the list in this influential document to understand how the cultural industries were seen from a government perspective in the late 1990s. Thirteen industries were selected as creative industries in the document as follows: 1) advertising, 2) architecture, 3) antiques, 4) crafts, 5) design, 6) fashion, 7) film, 8) leisure software, 9) music, 10) performing arts, 11) publishing 12) software, and 13) TV and radio (DCMS, 1998). As the list shows, most of these industries: from advertising to radio and television, are related to intellectual property (IP). According to the report, the total turnover for these industries was 1.125 trillion pound, the number of employers in these industries was about 1.3 million and 1.08 million pounds contributed towards international trade: this occupies about 5% of whole GDP in the UK. More importantly the growth rate was more than 16% in the Creative Industries between 1997-1998, while the GDP rate was less than 6% (DCMS, 2001). The creative industries were recognized as the domain with the most prospects and potential growth in the age of globalization.

Japan's definition of the creative industries follows the UK's. The 2013 METI research applies this UK government definition to Japanese industries but with the added new categories of: furniture, tableware, jewelry, stationary, leather products, and food and tourism. According to the report, the total turnover of Japan's creative industries is about 64.4 trillion JPY. This figure is larger than the car industry (54.1 trillion JPY). Further, while 5.9 million people work in the creative industries, 5.45 million in the car industry (METI, 2013).

It should be noted that the ‘Creative Industries’ policies—from Cool Britannia to Cool Japan—are not only economic policies but also cultural and diplomatic policies. The emergence of the creative industries signals the arrival of new relations between nation states, governments, media and culture. As a result of the success of Cool Britannia, many countries adopted creative industries not only as an economic strategy but also as a form of ‘soft power’: a phrase coined by the American International Relationship scholar, Joseph Nye (Nye, 2004). The ‘Korean Wave’ led by the Korean government is another successful example of this soft power: firstly through films, then through television dramas and K-pop. These Korean exports were positioned new cultural products with a Korean brand, in particular, in East and South East Asia in the 2000s.

Following these moves, the Japanese government established the ‘Creative Industries Promotion Offices’ in METI in order to promote Japanese cultural products, including pop culture, in June 2010. The Japanese name of the office is called the ‘Cool Japan Room’. In addition, in July 2011, it was reorganized as the Creative Industries Division in Commerce, Information Bureau. It was established to ‘promote the overseas advancement of an internationally appreciated “Cool Japan” brand, to cultivate the creative industries, and to promote these industries and other related initiatives in Japan and abroad, from cross-industry and cross-government standpoints’ (METI, 2011).

This shows a shift in how the government sees the present and future of Japanese industries: these new divisions were established in response to ‘the New Growth Strategy 2010’ which the cabinet announced and which follows METI’s ‘Industrial Structure Vision 2010’. They all suggested that Japan should change the industrial structure from a focus on manufacturing—for instance, through the car and electronic industry, which had been central to the development of the postwar Japanese economy—to a focus on the new industries of media, culture, and design, which were relatively small and even marginalized. This was followed by Industries 4.0, as noted in the introduction.

### III. The Creative Industries as Ideological Production

It would be wrong, however, to reduce the definition of the creative industries to the categories of media, culture and information. This is because the development of the creative industries does not involve adding new industries to the list of old existing industries but rather, involves transforming the nature of old industries and, further, going beyond economically profit-driven organizations. Concerning definitions, John Howkins suggests instead that, “it is best to restrict the term ‘creative industry’ to an industry where brain work is preponderant and where the outcome is intellectual property” (Howkins, 2008:119). According to this definition, the category of the creative industries is not limited to thirteen domains as suggested in the DCMS and can also include other industries.

Following Howkins’ argument, the domain of the creative industries’ would be much larger than that estimated by the DCMS or METI, though it is difficult to calculate, because of the R&D (Research & Development) carried out by scientists and engineers not only in corporations and but also in universities and other public sectors. Howkins estimated that the profit the creative industries produce is now about 40% of the US industry.

Richard Florida, the author of *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), defined the creative industry not by categories of industry, but by individual modes of labor. He roughly divided the US domestic economy into three categories; the creative industries, the service industries and the manufacturing industries and suggested that about 30% of American workers are now engaged in work in the creative industries and that their income is approximately 50% of the entire national income (Florida, 2007). The concept Florida proposed is that the creative industries may contain echoes of ‘the knowledge economy’ as put forward by Peter Drucker and Fritz Machlup in the late 1960s. Knowledge and information are, however, as Florida suggests, merely the raw materials that drive the economy. It is the concept of creativity that is the key driver of the economy.

It is not my aim here to strictly define the concept of the creative industries; it would be enough to point out that the idea of creativity is important not only in the media, culture and information industries, but in all industries in Japan today. For instance, in 1996, the Federation of Economic Organizations in Japan (*Keidanren*) suggested that to be ‘creative’

is crucial for the further development of the Japanese economy in the twenty-first century in their policy proposal entitled *Developing Japan's Creative Human Resources: An Action Agenda for Reform in Education and Corporate Conduct*. In the proposal it is stated that:

The economic system that sustained the nation's development until now, characterized by the "catch-up and pass" mentality and dependent on "government-private sector cooperation", has come to a complete dead end. Today Japan is on the threshold of a period of major change. When we look towards the approaching 21st century, it is clear that the nation must create a humanistic society that generates abundant economic vitality, and which can be realized through comprehensive deregulation.

In order to realize this ideal society, Japan will need a creative work force to work vigorously in all fields of society -- so the development of "creative human resources" is a matter of great urgency. In order to develop creative individuals, we must implement comprehensive reforms in the areas of education, corporate behavior, and institutional customs and practices that are now preventing individuals from manifesting their creativity. (*Keidanren*, 1996).

It may be interesting to consider what the 'creative' really means in this context, but it is also necessary to see that the term 'creative', that has been used mainly in the media and culture industry, was applied as a central concept in all industrial reforms. The wider meaning of the creative industries should be understood in this context. According to the Keidanren, the creative industries are part of all the industries as a whole. However the Keidanren proposal also suggests that, industries from the primary industries (agriculture, forestry and marine product industries), to the secondary industries (manufacturing) and the tertiary industries (finance, insurance and service) should be re-formulated, based on the model of the creative industries.

In order to further understand the nature of the creative industries, the global corporation Apple and its founder Steve Jobs provide a good example. Apple, started as a computer manufacturing company, may belong to the manufacturing industry based on traditional definitions. However, Apple's uniqueness is not attributed to its material products; but rather, to its immaterial products and their branding as: services, contents, designs, product images, advertising and marketing. The processes of

material production are outsourced in search of cheaper labor forces in developing countries. However, creative ability is required even in human resource management, quality control and the process of outsourcing.

The demand to be creative is now seen in every sector. A good example of this can be seen in Apple's now notorious campaign promoted in 1997: Think Different. The commercial includes the images of celebrities such as Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Martin Luther King, Richard Branson, John Lennon, Buckminster Fuller, Thomas Edison, Mohamed Ali, Ted Turner, Maria Callas, Mahatma Gandhi, Amelia Earhart, Alfred Hitchcock, Jim Henson, Martha Graham, Frank Lloyd Wright and Pablo Picasso. Steve Jobs himself narrated the commercial with the words:

Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do. (Apple, 1997)

Needless to say, Jobs probably wanted to situate himself at the end of this list of iconic figures of the twentieth century. Baptized into the counterculture of the 1960s and having launched the Apple computer in a DIY spirit in the 1970s, he is one of the 'crazy ones'. This is why he has become such a charismatic figure in the last decade of the twentieth-century.

It is not difficult to replace the 'crazy ones' with creative people or even with artists. Steve Jobs announced that those who are marginalized or excluded as bohemians would be central figures in the new economy. This idea was soon hijacked by mainstream ideologists in Japan for the purpose of justifying ongoing neoliberalist economic policies. Heizo Takenaka, ex-Minister of State for Financial Services, Internal Affairs and Communications in the cabinet of Prime Minister Jun'ichiro Koizumi offers an example of the appropriation of these ideas. Takenaka was responsible for the privatization of Japan's postal services and also initiated certain neoliberalist economic policies between 2002 and 2006. Reflecting on future

working conditions in Japan, Takenaka made the following comment concerning 'White Collar Exemption':

Some criticize 'white collar exemption' as the cause of 'zero' overtime pay. But I would say no artist can get overtime pay today. The reality is that this is the period when such a work style produces a much higher profit. (Takenaka, 2014)

You can clearly see the way in which the idea of art and artist is now appropriated in the logic of industries, in particular, in terms of working conditions. Considering the fact that Takenaka is not only an economist and politician, but the director of the second largest staffing service company in Japan, Pasona inc., it is clear that he uses the logic of creativity in order to maximize business profits in a labor market that is without limits in its flexibility. In other words, capitalism today is trying to exploit desire, affection and creativity; transmitting them into cheap and flexible labor forces.

#### IV. From Culture Industry to Creative Industries

The Apple's 'Think Different' campaign is very impressive, because it brilliantly combines the artistic concept of 'craziness' with an economic concept of 'industry' through the idea of creativity. The celebrities in the ad were all 'geniuses' who have a talent; 'crazy' ones who are 'not fond of rules'. The campaign also suggested that if you bought an Apple computer, you too might become a genius; however, you were most likely creative enough to be successful in your own business.

The slogan 'Think Different' demonstrates the role of the radical notion of creativity in the business world today. It symbolically shows us a shift from the culture industry that Adorno and Horkheimer once criticized (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1947/1997), to the creative industry. 70 years ago, Adorno and Horkheimer were uncomfortable with the term, the 'culture industry' because they felt that it sounded like a contradiction in terms. At that time, culture was still, to contemporary intellectuals, "the best which has been thought and said" (Arnold, 1869/1993), but which had not been incorporated into the market economy. Following their argument today,

we should be aware of the fact that this remains a contradiction in terms. The creative industries, have been magically compromised in late capitalist society.

Adorno and Horkheimer criticized the concept of the culture industry because they believed that the culture industry was an ideological apparatus designed to standardize culture and individual ways of thinking alike to an industrial product. Popular culture mediated through mass media standardizes people's minds in order to convert them into factory workers. In the 1940s, when Adorno and Horkheimer first discussed the culture industry, Fordist forms of capitalist production had been rapidly introduced alongside forms of scientific management, automation, the division of labor, the de-skilling of labor and so on.

As many suggested, in the 1970s the structure of capitalism radically shifted: from the manufacturing industries to the new tertiary industries. In developed countries, finance, security, information media and culture were increasingly becoming a larger industry as 'Post-Fordist' production became the dominant mode of production. In this post-fordist form of capitalist production, the key concepts are flexibility, fluidity, multiplicity and mobility. The message 'Think Different' can be understood as a perfect slogan for this new form of production. Mass production and mass consumption have gradually given way to small scale production and small scale consumption. While popular culture and the mass media standardize and homogenize people's way of thinking and establish the collective consciousness as a 'nation', market segmentation divides the nation into smaller groups. This shift may explain why, in the 1970s and the 1980s, the number of national television programs and hit songs decreased, while the consumption of media and culture became more varied according to the domains of generation, gender and taste.

At the same time, working conditions and modes of labor have changed across a range of industries. On a national level, in order to keep labor forces flexible, the number of part-time workers, temporary employees and *freeters* have dramatically increased since the beginning of the 1990s. The division of labor has begun to be seen on a global scale with the structures of production continually re-organized and fragmented. While manufacturing industries move to developing countries, the creative industries have remained in Japan. In response to these rapid industry

transformations, workers have been requested to be more flexible and more creative. In short, the creative industries are ideological apparatuses as well as products in the age of Post-Fordism.

In fact, since the early 1980s, the term 'creative' has often been used with a positive connotation in newly emerging industries such as advertising, the media and fashion. It should be also pointed out that the term '*freeter*' has also been used in a positive sense to refer to those who pursue their own way of life and who are free from the ties of life-time/full-time employment. Despite the lack of stability in these new roles, it is thanks to these new modes of employment, that some have been able to continue their creative work as independent filmmakers, musicians and theatre performers. This new creative form of work has burgeoned since the early 1990s when independent cultural movements also began to thrive.

## V. Globalization and Digital Technology

It would be not enough to explain the shift from the culture industry to the creative industries only in terms of the transition from Fordist production to Post-Fordist Production that took place in the 1970s. There are two other important elements in the arrival of the creative industries: the development of globalization and the development of information technology, in particular, the Internet and digital media.

Globalization is a complicated process: it is not only a process of homogenization and standardization, but also differentiation and fragmentation through a re-organization of ideas of the national, the global and the transnational. Our everyday life is increasingly surrounded by transnational products and services such Apple's iPhone, Starbucks Coffee, Google, Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, Nike, Uniqlo, etc. However, most of the products and services we enjoy are still Japanese domestic products. Moreover, on a policy level, as we have seen in the Cool Japan project, the promotion of the creative industries is seen as a 'national' project that promotes Japanese products in an overseas market. Even though transnational corporation services dominate most of the platforms on the Internet, discussions on the web are basically intranational or even nationalistic. In a sense, multi-national corporations make their profit by re-

organizing national consciousness.

One of the most significant features of the Internet is that it has transformed passive media readers, audiences and listeners into active participants and users. It provides an opportunity for a new form of democracy based on Internet activities. For instance, the anti-nuclear plant movement after the Fukushima incident and following the anti Japan-US security related bills would not have been possible without social media. However, the Internet has also become a means of organizing the dominant hegemony. The LDP and Abe administration have used the Internet as a means to generate public consensus online and offline.

The creative industries also provide a technological base for the 'societies of control'. The 'societies of control' is a new mode of power coined by Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze, 1992) to replace a Foucauldian notion of disciplinary societies. According to Deleuze, power operates in a much more subtle way in societies of control than in disciplinary societies. In societies of control, power does not have to operate in enclosed spaces such as schools, factories, hospitals and prisons, rather it operates in open spaces and networks and operates not through discipline but through constant modulation and regulation in the use of computer networks, banking systems, credit cards and other electronic networks. Participation is key to connect individuals to this network. Individuals may feel free to access to the network, but once connected, they are invited to be both active consumers and passive laborers without realizing. The network capitalism produces their profit by exploiting users as free labor forces.

## VI. Can Creative Workers of the World Unite?

I would like to conclude this by looking at a dark side of the creative industries: the working conditions in the creative industries. Although Richard Florida called those who belong to the creative industries the 'Creative Class' (Florida, 2002 : 8), all the creative workers are working under such different working conditions that they could hardly be categorized into one 'class'. Only a few people succeed in their businesses, and most of them work under very poor conditions. For instance, in the *anime* industry in Japan, more than 70% of animators in their twenties get paid less than one

million JPY (ten thousand USD) per year (Mōri, 2011). The rise of the creative industries has widened the gap between the rich and the poor, as most creative workers do not belong to a labor union, but instead work as individualized employees.

The problem not only concerns the worker's salary but also their whole way of working. The recent news that a 24 year-old woman at the giant advertising company, *Dentsu Inc* had killed herself from overwork, shocked Japan. She had just graduated from Tokyo University and was engaged in the Internet advertisements division. The twitter messages that she posted during the last couple of months of her life are deeply depressing. In once case, she tweeted, "It's already 4 a.m. now, and my body is trembling... What's in store for me after I survive all this stress, day after day?"

It is still too early to examine her death, but it is not difficult to imagine how she was forced to work in an isolated way under unspoken pressure in a creative industry. The term 'Black *Kigyō* (company)' is now in use as part of everyday language in Japan. It refers to an exploitive sweatshop-type company; however, within a Japanese context it was originally used in IT companies. *Karōshi* (suicide due to overwork) has been a social problem in different industries. The incident at *Dentsu Inc* (the largest advertising company in Japan and a champion of Japan's creative industries) shows us one way in which the certain companies exploit creative workers not only economically but also psychologically.

Marx and Engels once said 'Workers of the world, unite! (Marx and Engels, 1848/2004)' They believed that the transnational class consciousness of the proletariat would emerge through global spatial reformulation. For Marx and Engels, proletarian class consciousness grew through the sharing of spaces such as a factory or a coal mine shaft and imagining those who were experiencing the same conditions as they were in the world. Today, workers in creative industries may be too divided and individualized to establish class consciousness in a Marxist sense. Under these conditions then, how can a creative class consciousness emerge?

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