Chapter 2
Introduction

Abstract The *Introduction* develops the central argument of this work and provides insight into the research approach of a case study of making value and career building in contemporary visual art that departs from an economic geography and relational perspective on the organization and geography of the rising creative economy, and conceptualizes relations as forms of institutionalized practices and their strategic properties to take into account competition, selection, and an unequal distribution of rewards.

Keywords Creative economy · Making value · Career building · Case study · Contemporary visual art · Economic geography · Relationality · Institutions · Practices · Strategic properties · Competition · Unequal rewards

2.1 The Recent Momentum of Arts and Culture

In recent times arts and culture have gained momentum in the advanced capitalist societies, which is expressed by a growing convergence of cultural and economic spheres. The convergence has commonly been observed from opposing viewpoints either as economization of culture (Aspers 2009; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005) or culturalization of the economy (Amin and Thrift 2004; Lash and Urry 1994; Scott 1997).

Over the past decades cultural production and consumption as well as the number of intermediaries and services have multiplied manifold developing the arts disciplines of visual arts, performing arts, literature and music into full-blown cultural industries—contemporary public policy and academic language, so to speak (Garnham 2005; Hesmondhalgh 2007; McCarthy et al. 2005: 15). Moreover, arts and culture and other cultural and creative industries such as film, TV, radio, videogames, design, architecture, and advertising have been starting to feature prominently on both urban and regional development and research agendas (Gibson 2012; Lorenzen et al. 2008; Markusen and Gadwa 2010; Rantisi et al. 2006; O'Connor 2010). In addition to both quantitative growth and growing recognition

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as cultural and creative industries general economic trends such as the privatization of resources and management, and markets increasingly driven by speculation and financialization have manifested in arts and culture, too.

Vice-versa, not only traits of artistic practices and bohemian traditions but, and this is the central argument of this work, the key logics of how value of art is established and how art careers are built seem to have permeated into the wider creative economy, too. Elsewhere, these logics have been referred to as the metonymic relation of work and life (Graw 2008: 107), creative individualism based on open competition (Menger 1999: 566), the establishing of meaning, quality and value in relation to a professional world of producers, consumers and intermediaries (Danto 1964: 580), and complicity with precarity, and social and spatial inequality (Arnada et al. 2010).

This convergence of cultural and economic spheres has been part of broader economic, social and spatial shifts. These shifts have largely been described as the transition from mass production towards flexible specialization and post-Fordism (Amin 1994; Harvey 1989; Scott 1997), the formation of a new urban middle class favoring individualized over mass consumption (Bourdieu 1984; Raban 1974; Zukin 1989 [1982]), and the growth of interconnected networks of global flows and exchanges making territorial boundaries increasingly porous but not rendering places meaningless (Appadurai 1990; Castells 1996; Sassen 1991).

The post-industrial economy is characterized by a growing dominance of financial and business services, cultural, creative and knowledge industries, more flexible forms of production and labor, and individualized consumption (Amin 1994; Harvey 1989; Lash and Urry 1994; Scott 1997). The changes in the industrial organization are reflected by changes in the occupational structure. Just a few decades after the notion of "knowledge worker" (Drucker 1967) had been invented and accompanied by the prediction that major changes in society would be brought about by information (Bell 1974; Drucker 1967) the rise of a new occupational "creative class" has been observed (Florida 2002). This information-rich, creativity-led and technology-based occupational class refers to professionals working in both knowledge-based professions such as education, business, finance, healthcare and law, and in creativity- and innovation-based professions such as design, arts, media, science, research and engineering (Florida 2002: 69).

The creativity- and innovation-based workforce consists to a large extent of micro and small enterprises, self-employed persons, freelancers and interns (Oakley 2009). Their work culture breaks with conventional hierarchical systems of control and instead fosters low-entry, "boundary-less careers" (Hall 1996) that are characterized by a do-it-yourself ethos, peer recognition, cooperation and space for creativity and experiment (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Florida 2002: 12; Oakley 2009: 50). These "independents" (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999) often work from small offices, coffee shops, studios, co-working spaces and homes that are mostly located away from established commercial centers but in, or at least nearby, neighborhoods known for their artistic and creative scenes, amenities and trendy life-styles (Florida 2002; Grabher 2002; Ley 1996; Neff 2005). Although the creative people provide innovative and creative services and inputs to bigger

companies they predominately create individual novel goods, services and experiences, which are tried and tested in their local environment and communicated and marketed, increasingly via social media, to a wider audience (Hutton 2000; O'Connor 2010: 66).

The rise of creative class occupations is closely associated with the formation of a new urban middle class that has a growing interest in artistic lifestyles, aesthetic distinctions and individualized consumption (Bourdieu 1984; Raban 1974; Zukin 1989 [1982]). These interests find expression in occupational choices and the idea of being a creator, aesthetic reflexivity, and the desire to curate one's life. Distinctions can be found everywhere in everyday life, for example it is cuisine not just food, fashion not just clothes, artworks not just decoration, projects not just jobs, designed spaces not just offices or homes, locations not just some place (Bourdieu 1984; Featherstone 1990). For the pursuit of 'being different' or 'being authentic', status is ascribed to certain objects, services, experiences and locations. People are not only conspicuous about their consumption and lifestyles and try to keep up with the latest trends (Veblen 1934 [1899]), this attitude increasingly also refers to production in the cultural and creative industries and craft (Ocejo 2012). Yet, the more people do this or that or like this or that the less difference or distinction there is as both the significance of individual taste or choice and its associated higher status get slowly but surely eroded (Fasche 2006: 154). Thus, there is a need for ongoing differentiation of existing and invention of new products, services, experiences and places that can be marketed, or valued, as the 'new thing' to maybe become a major trend, a new lifestyle or the next place to be for the wider urban middle class (Lash and Lurry 2007; Molotch 2002; Pratt 2008; Oakley 2009: 29).

Taken together, occupational choices for careers in the cultural, creative and knowledge industries that follow intrinsic motivations and build on success of individual creativity and talent, as well as individualized consumption, aestheticisation of everyday life, and the curation of the self, seemingly emulate traits conventionally associated with artistic practices and bohemian traditions (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; McRobbie 2004; O'Connor 2010: 38; Zukin 1989 [1982]). In other words, arts and culture have moved right into the center of the post-industrial societies.

2.2 The Momentum of Arts and Culture in Perspective

Although there is no doubt about the growing relevance of arts and culture in the post-industrial societies regarding its praise views differ. Here, the focus is on two stylized and seemingly opposing but in fact closely interrelated perspectives, or in other words two sides of the same coin: the role of cultural and creative industries for economic growth and prosperity, and their capitalist realities of social and spatial inequality and precarity.

The first perspective follows the maxim that innovation, creativity and knowledge are the key drivers of competitiveness, growth, and prosperity in the post-industrial economy (Florida 2002; Glaeser 2011; Scott 2008). This dynamic is expressed by expanding production and consumption, growing employment numbers and increasing turnovers in the cultural and creative industries—all of which are contributing to both wealth and gross domestic products (Howkins 2001; O'Connor 2010: 37; Pratt 2008). The low entry and self-managed careers in the cultural and creative occupations are liberating by offering opportunities for everyone to follow intrinsic motivations and unique individual interests rather than those of organizations (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Hall 1996; McRobbie 2004; O'Connor 2010: 38).

Moreover, the growth of cultural and creative industries, individualized consumption, and the aestheticisation of everyday life have made the mutual relations between arts and culture and the urban realm increasingly visible. The everyday practices of independent cultural and creative entrepreneurs (Fasche 2006; Lange 2005; Pratt 2009), large-scale so-called flagship cultural developments (Baniotopoulou 2001; Evans 2003; Hamnett and Shoval 2003) and distinct consumption and lifestyle patterns shape and impact the urban realm. Artistic and cultural scenes, amenities and lifestyles offer information and learning resources for creativity- and innovation-based workers (Currid 2007; Grabher 2002), attract the wider middle class that wants to keep up with the latest trends (Florida 2002), and promotes urban regeneration (Fasche 2006). Culture-led urban regeneration is commonly described as physical restorations, rising real estate values, community development, and branding of neighborhoods and cities (Landry 2000; Bell and Jayne 2004; Mommas 2004). The potential of cultural and creative industries for economic development and urban regeneration has increasingly been recognized and embraced by policy makers whose cities and regions are pressured by structural unemployment, economic and social restructuring, financial austerity, and the competition between places within and across cities and regions (Kotkin 2005; Lloyd 2006; Mommas 2004).

Yet, the second perspective, or flip side of the coin, reveals the challenges of rising precarity, and social and spatial inequality that seem to accompany the rise of the creative and knowledge economy (Frank and Cooke 1995; Sholette 2005). The flexibilization of production and labor has shifted economic reward schemes from long-term and tenured employment towards short-term employment, contract work, self-employment, freelance and even unpaid work (Menger 1999; Terranova 2000). In fact, incomes among creative workers are highly unevenly distributed as the majority of creatives earn a rather low income with their creative work whereas a small minority of creative workers earns high incomes with their creative work (Lazzarato 2007; Oakley 2009: 60). Thus, these entrepreneurial self-managed careers entail significant social and economic risks for the individual (Beck 1992; Banks 2007). The risks or so-called "dark sides" of cultural and creative work (Oakley 2009: 41) are generally described as precarious working conditions such as fluctuating and contingent work and employment, irregular and low pay, and social insecurity (Banks 2007; McRobbie 2004; Neff et al. 2005; Ross 2009). These rather

unstable and unpredictable careers commonly associated with arts and culture seem to have manifested in the wider creative and knowledge economy.

Moreover, the creative workforce often chooses to live and work in areas that are up-and-coming locations and by the sum of their individual yet distinct choices and everyday activities they help putting these places on the map for a wider audience (Fasche 2006). Soon, the creatives are annexed by the wider middle class, retailers and developers, and subsequently rents and property prices are rising, so goes a common trajectory of neighborhood development from the ground up. From the other end of the spectrum, top-down so to say, the creation of new cultural institutions or cultural quarters, usually with iconic architectural design, aims to offer great cultural programming while turning the place into a thriving cultural destination leading to subsequent overall economic development and prosperity—yet experience seems to show that these desired effects are not guaranteed (Pogrebin 2009; Taylor 2007; Woronkowicz et al. 2012). In fact, both from the ground-up and top-down culture- or creativity-led regeneration of urban neighborhoods ever more often appear to be no win-win situation for the share of creative people that is unable to keep up with rising rents and property prices and a shrinking amount of affordable space, and instead fosters changes in the socio-economic compositions of these neighborhoods (Davidson 2012; Fasche and Mundelius 2010).

Hence, the growth and prosperity maxim based on creativity, knowledge and innovation seems to come at growing social costs begging the questions of *how* and *why*. How is economic value for individual works made and how are careers built in the rising creative and knowledge economy? And, why are economic rewards unequally distributed among creative and knowledge workers?

2.3 Research Approach and Outline

This work focuses on revealing *how* value is made and careers are built in the creative and knowledge economy and *why* rewards among creative and knowledge workers are unequally distributed. It is argued that the organizational and geographical logics of making value in the arts seem paradigmatic of what have become wider trends in the creative and knowledge economy in post-industrial societies. According to this argument not only traits conventionally associated with artistic practices and bohemian traditions (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; McRobbie 2004; O'Connor 2010: 38; Zukin 1989 (1982)) but also its key logics of value making and career building have permeated into the wider creative and knowledge economy. By building on evidence from a case study of contemporary visual art, referred to as paintings, drawings, photographs, sculptures, installations, media and performance art produced by artists since World War II, this work develops a heuristic conceptual framework, tentatively called value making ecology.

This heuristic conceptual framework emerges through an explorative endeavor of building "theory from cases" (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007) and emanates from

an economic geography perspective on the organization and geography of the rising creative and knowledge economy. The conceptualization starts from a relational perspective that puts forward an emphasis on cultural production as a collective process. Yet, observations prior to this research and the empirical findings indicate that making value and career building is not only a collaborative but also a highly competitive process eventually resulting in an unequal distribution of rewards. Hence, creativity and talent are necessary but not sufficient conditions for enduring value of individual works and stable long-term individual careers; instead creativity and talent need to be valued to eventually be rewarded in relation to a professional world, ultimately resulting in unequal distribution of rewards.

Thus, to account for competition, selection and the outcome of unequal rewards in the process of making value and career building, this work conceptualizes relations as forms of institutionalized practices and their strategic properties. In doing so, this work shifts the conceptual focus from a relational perspective of links and interactions embodying the positive associations with networks such as collaboration, flexibility, self-organization, de-centralization and autonomy, seemingly featuring prominently on the research agenda in the discipline of economic geography in recent years, to the very nature of relationality itself that manifests in actor-specific practices, power relations and unequal rewards (Sunley 2008). Due to a perceived scarcity in the conceptual repertoire of economic geography to explain selection, competition and the outcome of unequal rewards, the island of economic geography was left and the author travelled through the archipelago of heterodox economic studies (Peck 2012: 113) by tracing relational and institutional thinking that had been imported into economic geography at an earlier point in time back to their disciplines of origin, sociology, 'old' institutional economics, and institutional political economy. The result of these conceptual explorations are integrated into a heuristic conceptual framework, tentatively dubbed value making ecology.

This heuristic framework may contribute to an emerging debate in economic geography about immaterial qualities such as creativity, novelty and information as central parts in the determination of economic value and individual success in the rising knowledge and creative economy. The framework may be tried and tested in future research on other professional worlds of the creative and knowledge economy, such as design, film, music, architecture, fashion, literature, and journalism, and may or may not be refined, built upon, or abandoned. Moreover, it may also inspire more travel and closer collaboration across the "heterodox archipelago" (Peck 2012: 119) to better understand and conceptualize the organization and geography of value making and career building and the outcome of unequal rewards in the rising knowledge and creative economy.

Evidence from this explorative endeavor of conceptualizing the process of making value and career building in the creative and knowledge economy are revealed over the course of three main chapters, which are framed by introduction and conclusion, a prologue and an epilogue, and followed by a making of and an appendix. This *Introduction* (Chap. 2) provides the wider discourse of the rise of the creative and knowledge economy and makes a case for selecting contemporary art as adequate

example to reveal the logics underlying the process of how value is created and how careers are built and to better understand why economic rewards are unequally distributed among creative and knowledge workers. The first main chapter, *Practices of Making Value-Evidence from Gallerists* (Chap. 3), focuses on the gallerists' role as intermediaries between artists and collectors, or producers and consumers, and the strategic properties informing their day-to-day activities of raising values of contemporary artworks and building artists' careers within a wider selection system of institutions and practices. The second main chapter, *A Historical-Institutional View on Making Value* (Chap. 4), provides a perspective on continuities and change within the selection system of institutions and practices of making value of contemporary visual art and building careers since the Renaissance. It reveals how the market has become the dominant institution and gallerists an authority in the process of making value and building careers. The third main chapter, *The Organization and Geography of Making Value* (Chap. 5), builds on the two preceding chapters and develops a stylized heuristic conceptualization of the selection system of institutions and practices, tentatively called value making ecology, that facilitates the competitive process of raising values of contemporary artworks and building artists' careers. The *Conclusion* (Chap. 6) summarizes the main findings of this work, speculates about potential contributions, and sketches avenues for future research emerging from this work. *Prologue* (Chap. 1) and *Epilogue* (Chap. 7) provide brief descriptions of contemporary art market history highlighting how the largely self-regulating selection system of institutions and practices of making value and career building is dominated by the market and its cycles of art market boom and bust. The *Making Of* (Chap. 8) offers insight into the explorative character of this work and the research process of building theory from cases. The *Appendix* reveals the names and venues of 18 gallerists in three cities, Los Angeles, New York City and Berlin, whose insight builds the empirical foundation of this work.

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