

## 7. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

### 7.1 Research Questions Revisited

This book has tried to offer a critical contribution to the growing literature on the creative industries and the KBE by focusing on the relations between accumulation, regulation and networks. In doing so, the overarching theoretical goal has been to further develop a cultural political economy of the KBE that takes seriously the cultural turn in social analysis, while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of capital accumulation and state regulation. Four research questions guided this book from the very beginning: to what extent, and in what ways, are network dynamics related to processes of capital accumulation and state regulation? If there are significant relationships, what are the forms of these relationships? Why do these relationships between accumulation, regulation and networks exist? And why can these relationships also be non-existent?

All four questions were addressed and answered in the previous chapters. After a discussion in *chapter two* of basic methodological questions, *chapter three* introduced the three main concepts of this book: accumulation, regulation and networks. Building on the regulation approach, I argued that each historical era is characterized by a particular accumulation regime, which needs to be understood as a complementary pattern of production and consumption that remains stable for an extended period of time. In order to stabilize these accumulation regimes, however, they need to be regulated through the support of a large number of rules, social norms, institutions, laws and policies, collectively referred to as the mode of regulation. During Fordism, the dominant patterns of accumulation and regulation could be understood as coupled on the national scale, but the crisis of Fordism has radically questioned this coupling, leading to a disjuncture between the spatio-temporalities of regulation and the spatio-temporalities of accumulation. The guiding narrative of the KBE offers a way of imagining and implementing new forms of regulation that can stabilize contemporary processes of accumulation and is therefore understandably embraced by state

institutions, even though it remains highly uncertain if this regulation will (or even can) be successful. Within this (post-)regulationist framework, networks occupy a rather paradoxical position, since they are understood both as producing crisis — since the proliferation of networks has provoked the crisis of Fordism — and as solutions to this crisis — since networks are seen as hybrid phenomena that connect states and markets, hierarchies and civil society in innovative ways. Retracing the process of theoretical model-building in the regulation approach, I argued that the notion of network tends to appear in the explanatory vocabulary in those moments when socio-spatial phenomena or changes cannot or can no longer be grasped by the adopted theoretical framework. Networks, according to this interpretation, are identified in order to investigate those processes that circumvent and transform older forms of accumulation and regulation. In that sense, networks are not only related to (and caused by) but also emergent from (and thus irreducible to) established accumulation regimes and modes of regulation. This necessitates, as I have argued, the development of a cultural political economy interested not only in causal mechanisms and structures, but also in the multiplicity of emergence.

Chapters four to six grounded these theoretical debates by concentrating on the case of music networks in London and Berlin. *Chapter four* focused on the dimension of location, investigating the relations between the spatiality of networks and the spatialities of capital accumulation as well as state regulation. By comparing the spatial assumptions of cluster theory with the spatial realities of music networks, it was shown that network dynamics are indeed related to accumulation and regulation, but that these relations are highly partial and uneven. Some nodes — venues and, to an extent, artists — are reliant on physical proximity for their economic survival, but this does not apply to most other nodes — such as distributors, record labels or booking agencies. Many actors embedded in these networks of aesthetic production are based in urban areas with concentrations of cultural producers, but their actual interactions are often highly flexible and transscalar and only partially take place within specific clusters. This questions the viability of regulatory attempts at promoting creative clusters, since the spaces of accumulation are, in this particular case, much more networked than clustered.

*Chapter five* further analyzed the relations between networks, accumulation and regulation by highlighting the dimension of communication. After a discussion of the notions of texture and strategic selectivity, I analyzed policy discourses on the creative industries in Berlin and London. These discourses were interpreted as the semiotic dimension of a strategic selectivity aimed at the

promotion and regulation of the KBE. In order for these policy discourses to have any selective impact on the communicative textures of music networks, however, they need to be implemented through interventions in the economic and social spheres. Four fields of intervention were investigated: intellectual property; free choice and commodification; the built environment; and the discourse of flexibility and change. Once again, the impact of capital accumulation and state regulation on actual networked music practices was shown to be highly partial and uneven. Although assumptions of free choice and processes of commodification characterized both the policy debates as well as the music networks, its importance is central to liberal capitalism as such and thus needs to be analyzed as pre-dating the current policy interest in commodifying creative production. Similarly, intellectual property has been defended by state institutions as well as capitalist businesses for over a century, but its current centrality to the regulation of the creative industries emerges precisely at that moment in time in which capital accumulation through intellectual exploitation has become highly uncertain due to processes associated with digitization. The built environment offers a slightly more successful method of regulatory intervention: both in the case of Berlin and London, it was shown that music venues were partly enrolled into broader accumulation regimes through processes of legalization, professionalization and securitization. At the same time, this enrolment remains precarious due to the organizational complexity of the regulated objects (the venues) and the emergent dimensions of the music networks. Also, the flexibility and constant change that is promoted as part of the KBE resonates with many of the discourses produced by the music networks. At the same time, it would be wrong to argue — as the policy debate on the creative industries tends to do — that this proves the entrepreneurial dynamics of networks of aesthetic production. Doing so amounts to a misattribution of causality (Sayer 1992) by attributing to capital accumulation what is, to an important extent, the effect of aesthetic debates and shifts immanent to the music networks.

*Chapter six*, finally, investigated the relations between accumulation, regulation and networks by focusing on the dimension of labor. After a brief discussion of the representation of creative labor in policy documents, I analyzed the extent to which music network dynamics are related to and shaped by accumulation and regulation. Four substantial dimensions were identified: a naturalization of the market; an understanding of the self as oriented towards market-mediated individual autonomy; an individualization of risk; and activity as the entrepreneurial ideal. These dimensions clearly showed the important extent to which music networks fit within the

broader shift from welfare to workfare, as theorized by regulationist authors. At the same time, however, such an analysis ignores the non-existent relations between accumulation, regulation and networks. In the case of labor, I argued, this is mediated above all through the particular instance of free and unremunerated labor. To an extent, free labor intensifies the pressures associated with creative labor. One of the main biographical solutions to the structural problem of underpayment in the music networks is the reliance on family support, loans and unemployment benefits or second (paid) jobs. Also, unpaid labor is central to the organization of music production through the important role played by interns, volunteers and overwork. This tends to lead to a downward pressure on income levels and a strong competition for the minority of paid work available. At the same time, however — and this is where the non-existence of relations between networks, accumulation and regulation becomes important — this economic account of free labor tends to ignore the fact that labor by most actors in these music networks is “willingly given” (Terranova 2004, 94), reflecting a refusal on the part of these actors to approach creative labor as an ordinary job characterized by the sale of labor power. Drawing on as well as criticizing (post-)operaist accounts of free labor, I showed the extent to which free labor is central to music production and needs to be incorporated into a sophisticated version of a cultural political economy of the KBE. Creative labor is not merely labor, after all.

## 7.2 Further Research Directions

Having started with a number of research questions, this book ends with a further round of questions, since the answers produced in the previous chapters raise a whole host of new questions that need to be addressed at some point. Four theoretical problematics seem particularly important:

First of all, this book has shown the need to further develop a cultural political economy that can do justice to the complexity of the KBE. Jessop’s post-regulationist approach is of enormous value and has provided the underlying theoretical structure of this publication, but his heavy reliance on the core concepts of accumulation and regulation is by no means unproblematic. Above all, by locating capital and the state on the root stratum (as discussed in chapter two and three), but all other social processes on higher levels of reality, it can only understand these processes in relation to capital and the state. This is a reductionist move that might be acceptable for a traditional political economy, but a *cultural* political economy will have to add other causal mechanisms next to capital and the

state on this root stratum of reality. Theoretically, this is a difficult task and I cannot predict how this project will develop in practice, but most likely it will have to involve a stronger recognition than is currently the case in the regulationist literature that the identification of levels of reality and associated causal mechanisms is dependent on the object of research. In this book, I made a case for integrating the debate on accumulation and regulation with the third core concept of network, since this sensitized the analysis to those dimensions of music production irreducible to capital accumulation and state regulation. Future research will have to investigate if this sensitizing concept can be usefully developed into one or more stronger explanatory concepts.<sup>1</sup>

Second, the version of cultural political economy as presented here grants much greater importance to the semiotic dimensions of social life than is common in (marxist and non-marxist) political economic theories. Although accumulation and regulation are theorized as core concepts, they can only be sociologically understood through an investigation of their mediation through particular discourses and institutions. These, in turn, constitutively shape and direct accumulation and regulation towards particular projects and strategies. If this is a useful way of thinking about capital and the state, then this does raise the question where these discourses come from. Neither the regulation approach nor its latest incarnation as cultural political economy have the tools to analyze these discourses, since they cannot understand how these discourses emerge and with what logics these operate until appropriated by particular accumulation regimes and modes of regulation. This skews the analysis, since a cultural political economy approach will tend to concentrate on those discourses that are involved in the reproduction of the value form and political form (or, at the most, in inhibiting the reproduction).<sup>2</sup> A more sophisticated cultural political economy, therefore, should be able to tell us how these discourses — in their irreducibility to capital and the state — emerge. This necessitates, in my view, a stronger acknowledgement of the sub-

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- 1 Although there are many possible 'explanatory concepts', in the case of music networks I would propose thinking through the role of 'aesthetic objects' in structuring music dynamics. Examples from other fields could include religious rituals, social events, ethical imperatives, the role of bureaucracy, etc.
  - 2 This bias is also visible in my own analysis of creative industries policies on London and Berlin in the previous chapters. My conceptualization of London and Berlin highlights underlying causal mechanisms and thus tends to reduce both cities to cases of accumulation and regulation. This seems acceptable from a regulationist point of view, but would need to be addressed in future analyses.

stantial extent to which actually existing as well as imagined political economies are socio-cultural phenomena that need to be analyzed as such.

Third, the concept of regulation is central to regulation theories as well as the current version of the cultural political economy approach, but its role in explanation is more slippery than one might expect at first glance. According to the Parisian regulationists, *régulation* refers to the processing and moderation of social relations in order to contain the inherent contradictions of capital. This is a macro-societal focus that directs attention towards core forms of regulation, such as the wage-labor nexus, competition and state intervention. Jessop's own account of regulation follows this regulationist approach, but translates it into a more consciously state theoretical framework: as a result, his empirical discussions of regulation tend to concentrate on state action oriented towards certain objects of regulation in the economic and social spheres. My own argument has largely followed Jessop's account, but has also tried to acknowledge more strongly the plurality of the social by referring to networks as alternative forms of regulation (that are not directly related to the state). After all the empirical research for this book, however, my own feeling is that this all-encompassing use of regulation too easily ignores important manifestations of disunity, decoupling and translation. Jessop, it must be emphasized, does address this issue by relying on theories of self-organization and the Luhmannian notion of autopoiesis, but his overarching argument is directed towards the ecological dominance of capitalism (Jessop 2002a, 24-28). At the same time, he consistently highlights the limits of capital accumulation and state regulation due to their interaction with a wide range of self-organizing systems, characterized by their own operational codes and institutional dynamics.<sup>3</sup>

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3 Thus, as Jessop (2002, 7-8) explains: "[...] in exploring the institutional and social interconnections between the economic and the political, I draw on theories of self-organization. My initial source of inspiration here was Marx's analysis of the self-valorization of capital, that is, capital's capacity to reproduce itself through the profitable reinvestment of past profits as it moves repeatedly through the successive stages of what Marx termed the circuit of capital. However, while Marx confined his analysis of self-organization mainly to the capitalist mode of production, it is worth considering several other potentially self-organizing (or autopoietic) systems with major significance for social order in modern societies. These include the legal system, the political system, science, the educational system, religion and art. Each has its own operational code, organizational principles, institutional dynamics, instrumental rationalities and logics of appropriateness. Together they form a self-organizing ecology of instituted systems

This creates a tension in his work that is in need of further investigation. Recent work in the field of complexity theory (e.g. Byrne 1998, Ch. 8; Healey 2006; Doak and Karadimitriou 2007; Martin and Sunley 2007) seems to offer useful perspectives in this regard, particularly in relation to its interest in the limits of governance and its understanding of urban spaces as complex adaptive environments.

Fourth, I already indicated the need to develop the regulation approach into a cultural political economy of emergence, but this aspect deserves more attention. Clearly, the regulation approach as well as the current version of cultural political economy are already attentive to the emergent dimensions of social life. Most importantly, in theorizing the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism regulationists understand the latter to be emergent from the former. Also, Jessop's strategic-relational approach and his interpretation of state institutions as strategically selective integrates action and emergence with his broader argument concerning the tendencies of social structures and underlying causal mechanisms. Once again, however, the proposed models cannot deal with the world as the "unobserved wilderness of what happens simultaneously" (Luhmann 2000, qtd. in Nowotny 2005) or what critical realists describe as the potentially infinite totality of reality. Many processes elude its grasp. A transdisciplinary move, in this regard, is often useful, since it integrates new and different knowledges with the already-established knowledge domain (transforming both in the process) and enables the production of a more encompassing and coherent account of social dynamics. It is this move that also enables critiques to be formulated, since the introduction of new knowledges can be used to point to the limits of the previous body of knowledge.<sup>4</sup> As we have seen in this book in the case of networks, this sensitizes analysts to those phenomena that cannot be categorized, but that point to something else 'outside' of the adopted theoretical framework. Transdisciplinarity, however, is clearly not a final solution, since the shifting of knowledge boundaries simultaneously directs attention to new emergent objects that need to be explained.

The consequence of this argument is that emergent phenomena are simultaneously in- and outside of established theories and posited causal mechanisms and social structures. This leads to an interesting side-effect of emergence. I speculated earlier that networks parallel the methodological moment of abduction within retroduction: they are characterized by a moving 'away from' estab-

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that develops through the interaction between their respective operational autonomies and material interdependencies".

4 In that respect, maybe my discussion of explanatory critique in 2.2.3 should actually be rephrased and understood as comparative critique.

lished causal mechanisms, but can simultaneously only be explained in relation to (if certainly not reduced to) these mechanisms. This remains a speculation and would deserve more research on the relation between methodology and substantive theory as well as ontology and epistemology, but if this is indeed the case, it dramatically increases the status of description and empirical research in social science and in the development of theory. In contrast to critical realism and regulation theory with its dominant focus on the explanation and the discovery of underlying causal mechanisms, the acknowledgement of emergence as an important dimension of reality seems to necessitate a much stronger orientation towards empirical, descriptive research than is currently the case, since this is the only way of finding out more about the characteristics of these emergent phenomena.<sup>5</sup>

This last comment offers an opportunity to move on to the more empirical consequences of this book. First of all, the research has shown that electronic music networks are best understood as an extreme case of networks of aesthetic production due to its high levels of change, its strong intertwinement with non-capitalist social relations and its relative openness to new actors for social as well as technological reasons (there is no strong policing of aesthetic boundaries and access to these networks is easy due to the use of affordable technologies). It might very well be possible that other music genres or different fields of aesthetic production are more usefully analyzed as critical cases where the non-existence of relations between networks of aesthetic production and accumulation and regulation is less pronounced. Adam Krims, for example, has clearly shown the linkages between urban accumulation and regulation and music genres such as hip-hop, classical music, or tumba on the island of Curaçao (e.g. Krims 2001, 2002, 2003, 2007). Indeed, his conclusions were my starting point for this book, but it turned out that similar conclusions could simply not be made in the case of electronic music. There is virtually no other work in this field, but one can imagine a number of exciting research projects that investigate the reasons for these differences and similarities between music genres. Also, other fields of aesthetic production are likely to exhibit different logics and, as a result, will interact with processes of accumulation and regulation in different ways. There is a well-established tradition of research on cultural production in

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5 Indeed, this is why the strategy of abduction is usually associated with interpretivist approaches to social enquiry, such as hermeneutics, phenomenology, social constructivism, symbolic interactionism, etc. See Blaikie (2000) for a useful discussion. Also see the excellent defense by William H. Sewell Jr. of interpretivist approaches as part of his larger aim to develop an historical sociology of events. See: Sewell Jr. (2005).

the sociology of arts as well as cultural and media studies (e.g. Ryan 1992; Bourdieu 1993; Hesmondhalgh 2002; Tanner 2003) that could be appropriated in this regard, but it would have to be re-analyzed through the lens of a renewed cultural political economy.

Second, my selection of the cities of London and Berlin was based on the assumption that these cities could be usefully understood through the lens of post-Fordism and the KBE. This assumption still seems reasonable, but the unexpected emergent dynamics of electronic music networks complicated my other assumption that it would be possible to identify clear-cut relations of variation between the urban environment in which these networks operate and the character of these networks. Two research directions seem possible to address this problem. On the one hand, a more encompassing focus that includes multiple fields of aesthetic production might not only enable us to identify the similarities and differences between these fields, but also the extent to which these fields are differentially shaped by accumulation and regulation in urban environments. On the other hand, the inclusion of cities as cases that cannot reasonably be understood in the context of the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism and the establishment of a KBE (for example, cities outside the OECD core) might enable us to learn more about the relations as well as non-relations between urban spaces and actual aesthetic production practices. It is very well possible, for example, that we will come across cases of aesthetic production that are highly similar, but based in rather different cities (say, for the sake of illustration, Havana in Cuba and London in the UK) or different times (for example, East Berlin in the 1960s and the eastern parts of Berlin in the 1990s). This, however, cannot easily be theorized by the regulation approach and the current version of cultural political economy, since its logic of analysis almost necessarily ties specific social instances to the broader 'blocks' of timespace in which they are seen to operate.

Third and finally, the question concerning the actual impact of state regulation in the case of the creative industries deserves more attention. Over the last decade, there has been a dramatic increase in policy-oriented publications on the supposedly important role played by the creative industries as tools for the economic development of particular cities, regions or states. More recently (particularly in the UK, but less so in Germany), researchers have criticized these policy-debates for ignoring the realities of cultural work and for operating on the basis of a neoliberal notion of creativity (for a recent useful overview of these debates, see Lovink and Rossiter 2007). Although my book broadly fits within this critical agenda, I think there is a tendency in these debates to overestimate the actual impact of state regulation. This often leads to a situation in

which the critics adopt a similar worldview (only inverted) to the one they aim to criticize, which can easily lead to a reproduction of the creative industries hype. Not only are most of the institutions assigned with implementing creative industries policies rather weak, it remains unclear how and if policy mechanisms can intervene in any substantial sense in the highly complex aesthetic production networks. More attention should therefore be paid to the limits of creative industries policy implementation. The consequences of this observation, however, are rather ambivalent. On the one hand, it acknowledges the relative autonomy of creative production and the immanent limits set to its enrolment into broader accumulation strategies. On the other hand, the strong decoupling of networks of aesthetic production and state regulatory institutions also means that potential feedback from actually existing networks of aesthetic production to policy circles is obstructed, thus limiting the opportunities to transform the “economic imaginaries” (Jessop 2004a) produced by state institutions. This limits the extent to which cultural producers can expect to play a role in shaping broader processes of accumulation and regulation, despite their supposedly central position within the KBE.