

# Book Review: Advanced Introduction to Creative Industries by John Hartley

*In **Advanced Introduction to Creative Industries**, John Hartley provides a new understanding of the creative industries and how they have evolved, drawing on real-life examples and case studies. In making the creative economy tangible and relatable, this book is a relevant and practical resource for those with an existing interest in the creative industries as well as those who are new to the landscape, recommends [Sarah Ramadhita](#).*

***Advanced Introduction to Creative Industries*. John Hartley. Edward Elgar Publishing. 2021.**

John Hartley presents a way of re-thinking the creative economy in [Advanced Introduction to Creative Industries](#), dividing the book into the industries' beginnings in the 1990s in the first five chapters before an examination of the current and future landscape of the creative economy in the second half. Written during COVID-19 and published at a time when the world is facing a domino effect of economic, environmental and political crises ignited by the pandemic, this book offers a new way of thinking about the creative economy, one that focuses on a future-facing and collective definition.

Hartley is a leading academic and author in media and communications, journalism and creative economy. His extensive experience in advising governments and organisations has positioned him as a leading thinker of the creative economy and creative industries. He has applied his extensive expertise within this book to provide a new understanding of this landscape and how it has evolved, using current real-life applications and case studies.

Hartley uses historical and contemporary examples in art and culture to analyse the multiple shifts in the creative industries: from national to global cultures, individual to systems thinking and analogue to digital technologies. His *Advanced Introduction to Creative Industries* contributes a new way of defining the creative economy, making it tangible and relatable.

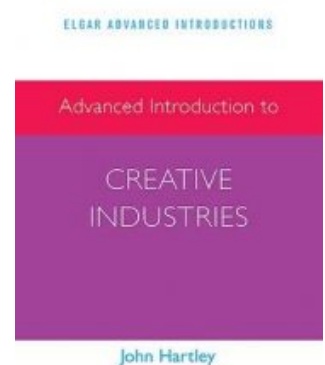


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In his introduction, Hartley mentions how the creative economy has grown in Australia as a way of representing Indigenous culture and connecting with the cultural arts. The introduction suggests a direction of travel for the creative economy as something that has grown out of its Eurocentric origins to potentially become a space of inclusivity and, dare we say, decolonisation.

The sentiment Hartley communicates in his introduction concerning the impact of the creative economy and industries in Australia as '[making] room for multicultural and indigenous diversity' (ix) implies a move towards decentralising creativity as a concept and introducing the creative economy as an inclusive sector. As it evolves with time, there also needs to be space to understand the creative economy as a concept that can be or has been defined by the political climate as voices and discussions around issues of race, ethnicity and diversity have grown louder and become more relevant. A recurring theme within this book is the concept of the collective, groups and collaboration and, with this, the idea of diversity.

This book therefore opens space to rethink the creative industries as they pertain to regions and cultures not of the Global North. The book can be a starting point for a conversation on how the creative industries have developed in their own way in parts of the world such as Indonesia, Brazil or Pakistan, where they have been used as a tool for development. This would extend further questions and investigations regarding the impact of conceptualising creativity in this way and the diversity through which the term is understood and internalised as well as how it exists in reality.

*Advanced Introduction to Creative Industries* navigates a new understanding of the creative economy, exploring how it has changed and who has the power to change it. Asking questions about how to define the creative economy, the first chapter ventures into distinguishing between the common terms alongside discussions about the field: 'Even the name is contentious: creative industries or *economy*; creative or *cultural* industries?' (1). These questions remind us of the common confusions around the creative economy, whilst also highlighting and reminding us that these terms and concepts are related. Hartley makes a strong point regarding the conversations that have played a role in building the foundations of the creative economy, particularly amongst policymakers, consultancies and think tanks: those who hold the power in structuring what it is. From this, he begins to set the scene by presenting the book as a conceptual tool that 'transforms the terrain' of the creative industries.

Hartley's exploration of the notions of knowledge and creativity pinpoints the core value of the creative economy as combining the two: 'this book "navigates" both interpretive and systematic approaches to creativity, with a view to a destination that integrates creativity with knowledge systems and natural systems alike' (2). This relationship connects to L.S. Vygotsky who positioned the link between social and individual processes as being key in the construction of knowledge (in [Vera John-Steiner, 2000](#)) as well as [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi \(1999\)](#), who promoted a systems perspective that includes the interactive effects of personal background, society and culture. Moving away from the notion of creativity in terms of the individual or 'lone genius' ([Paul B. Paulus and Bernard A. Nijstad, 2003, 3](#)), Hartley stresses the dynamics of collaboration in creativity and knowledge through consideration of cultural diversity and locations.

As Hartley states, the creative economy has a life of its own and a systemic landscape for 'communicable and thereby tradable versions of difference, newness, pattern, meaningfulness, relationship and identity [...] experimentation, knowledge – sharing, remix and discovery' (3). The interactive nature of the creative industries has a strong practical element, relating to application, experimentation and collective dialogue. Thus, the creative economy becomes a tool for togetherness and collectivity; navigating it means understanding the components that create collective experiences and what is understood as 'culture':

Creativity, like thoughts, ideas, words – and individuals – is an abundant resource, indiscriminately shared among the whole population. Creativity doesn't matter until it is organised in and among groups (91-92)

In the final chapters, Hartley goes deeper into the idea that 'culture ensures both the stability/continuation of knowledge at the core (rules) and the emergence of newness at the periphery (creativity)' (92). He provides an understanding of how it has grown today through finding a parallel with culture and the dynamism within it due to knowledge and its evolution. At its core, the book attempts to move the creative industries away from economic goals, or perhaps expand them to be more inclusive by opening up the spheres in which they could exist. Creativity becomes change: it is innovation that is accessible, unifying and mediates across populations.

The examples Hartley uses connect us to what is going on in the world today, drawing on relevant and influential knowledge-sharing channels (social media) and leading popular figures who are using these platforms to educate on social movements like Black Lives Matter and #MeToo. These connections strengthen the goals of this book as an introduction, applying the concepts to something relatable. However, whilst rooting the discussion in things we know, the book takes a run-around route to grasping the points Hartley is making: sometimes the connections to current world issues such as food production and climate change feel like a reach. This might confuse the reader as it risks presenting too many connections in thinking about the creative economy, which could become overwhelming.

This book is a re-introduction to creative economy, as Hartley stresses the fluidity of the landscape. The inclusion of a wide range of examples from music to influencers educating through social media moves between the historical and the contemporary. The discussions introduce various starting points for different perspectives from which to understand the creative economy, particularly as it can be experienced in intersectional contexts. Ultimately, this book is a relevant and practical resource for those with existing interest in the creative economy as well as those who are new to this landscape.

- This review first appeared at [LSE Review of Books](#).

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*Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of USAPP – American Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.*

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## About the reviewer

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Sarah Ramadhita received her MSc in Social Psychology from LSE before obtaining her MA in Social Anthropology from SOAS with research interests in cultural identity, creativity, creative and social entrepreneurship and development. She gained experience working in NGOs, non-profits and government organisations implementing development programmes and conducting cultural research. She is now pursuing her PhD in Anthropology at Goldsmiths, University of London, researching creativity and community development focusing on traditional craft as a creative industry.