

Creativity: from discourse to doctrine?¹

Philip Schlesinger²
Stirling Media Research Institute

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² Philip Schlesinger is Professor of Film & Media Studies and Director of Stirling Media Research Institute. He has a degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from Oxford and a PhD in Sociology from the London School of Economics. He is joint editor of the academic journal *Media, Culture & Society* and sits on the editorial boards of other UK journals as well as of journals edited in Austria, Brazil, France, Malaysia, Mexico, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. He is the author of *Putting 'Reality' Together* (2nd ed. 1987) and *Media, State and Nation* (1991) and co-author of *Televising 'Terrorism'* (1983), *Women Viewing Violence* (1992), *Reporting Crime* (1994), *Men Viewing Violence* (1998), *Consenting Adults?* (2000), *Open Scotland?* (2001) and *Mediated Access* (2003). His most recent co-edited book is *The SAGE Handbook of Media Studies* (2004).

Abstract: *This article reports on work in progress on UK government policy on the creative industries. It argues that the central, animating idea of 'creativity' has moved centre stage over the past decade, as Labour Party policy has evolved during its period in power since May 1997. The central contention is that from being a discourse that itself emerged from an earlier discourse on the cultural industries, 'creativity' has subsequently been elaborated to become a virtual doctrine, and is now uncritically reproduced across government reports and the wider policy community, including most academics. To illustrate the argument, reports dealing with the re-engineering of business, the refocusing of education, and the next stage of firing up the 'creative economy' are all analysed. Indications of forthcoming work on this research project are given in conclusion.*

Keywords: *creativity, creative economy, discourse, economic competitiveness, policy, UK government*

Resumo: *Este artigo relata um trabalho em andamento sobre a política do governo do Reino Unido a respeito das indústrias criativas. Sustento que a idéia fundamental, impulsionadora da criatividade se deslocou para o centro na década passada, enquanto se desenvolvia a política do Partido Trabalhista durante o seu período no poder desde maio de 1997. O argumento central é que, de um discurso que emergiu de discursos anteriores sobre as indústrias culturais, a "criatividade" tem sido posteriormente elaborada para se tornar uma espécie de doutrina, reproduzida acriticamente agora através de relatórios governamentais e de comunidades interessadas mais amplas, incluindo muitos acadêmicos. Para ilustrar o argumento, relatórios que lidam com a reengenharia dos negócios, o redirecionamento da educação e o próximo passo para incrementar a "economia da criatividade" são todos analisados. Indicações de trabalhos vindouros relacionados a esta pesquisa são oferecidas na conclusão.*

Palavras-Chave: *criatividade; economia da criatividade; discurso; competitividade econômica; política; governo do Reino Unido*

Our aim must be to create a nation where the creative talents of all the people are used to build a true enterprise economy for the twenty-first century – where we compete on brains not brawn.

Tony Blair, UK Prime Minister (NACCCE Report 1998: 6)

This survey will argue that the talent war has to be taken seriously. It will try to avoid defining talent either too broadly or too narrowly but simply take it to mean brainpower – the ability to solve complex problems or invent new solutions. It will thus focus on what Peter Drucker, the late and great management guru, called “knowledge workers”.
Adrian Wooldridge (2006: 6)

All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.
Antonio Gramsci (1971: 9)

Introduction

This is a brief exploratory essay that centres on the idea of ‘creativity’ and its signal importance for the workings of what is now in the United Kingdom increasingly called the ‘creative economy’. It makes no claims to exhaustiveness and reflects work in progress. In what follows, I shall show how the idea of creativity has been elaborated in current policy discourse. But first, a caveat to the reader: this is a quickly changing field, and what is presented here is merely a snapshot taken in the autumn of 2006.

My focus is on the UK. However, as will become rapidly apparent, we are addressing a body of thought – with *intended* practical consequences – that is actually now increasingly international in scope. That said, the precise implementation of these ideas, and the meanings attached to them, vary and therefore can only be fully investigated by looking at concrete cases. Comparative policy research undertaken within an understanding of the uneven development brought about by globalisation is therefore the way ahead.

At the heart of my argument is the proposition that ‘creativity’ has established itself as a hegemonic term in an increasingly elaborated framework of ideas that is now so taken for granted that it is a mark of insanity - or even worse, political irrelevance - to question its assumptions.

I wish to demonstrate the extent to which the ideas in question are influential and set the terms for thought and action across a number of policy fields. My primary concern lies in the field of media and communications. However, it is clear that other areas, such as science policy, the relations between universities and businesses, and the purposes of the educational field more generally, are all now being shaped by conceptions of what it is to be creative and innovative, the kind of value that this is meant to endow us with and how these attributes are supposed to make our societies and economies grow in a competitive world.

There is no attempt here to chart the landscape exhaustively. This account merely provides an initial – and selective - reconnaissance of material in the public domain. At present, there is a dominant culture of uncritical acceptance. And this is limited not just to policy discourse. Alongside the elaboration of the doctrine of creativity is a specialist discourse of creative industries academic analysis, whose horizons are expanding in line with the expansion of the scope of creativity and innovation themselves, not least because these are as providing a solution to our problems.³

Curiously, at the same time as creativity becomes more and more fashioned into a doctrine, it is also becoming extraordinarily banal. While it enjoys hegemony, it is also increasingly ubiquitous. It is ‘British creativity’, for instance, that ensures market success for Thornton’s, the chocolate manufacturers, so their advertising tells us. Not on its own, to be sure: cocoa and sugar are added ingredients. In a district nearby to mine in Glasgow, the city in which I live, there is a ‘creative hairdresser’. We are left wondering what wondrous transformations occur. My inbox is regularly assaulted by spam offering me courses to explore my creativity (and not least develop my ludic qualities) in New York City and

³ For a relevant example, see Cunningham (2006).

various European locations, which so far I have managed to resist. We could multiply such examples almost indefinitely.

The creative economy as a discourse

In the UK, the discourse of creativity has been developed by government over the past decade and has now become an increasingly elaborated doctrine of the ‘creative economy’. Official thinking is a discourse in the sense that it is self-sustaining and increasingly striving towards consistency. It has become a doctrine by virtue of being an object of unceasing advocacy (and apparent profound belief) by its proponents to the extent that it is now an obligatory starting-point for those that wish to enter into dialogue with policy-makers. Adequate work on the archaeology and the uses of the term creativity in policy discourse remains to be done.⁴ But the broad lines of official thinking on creativity may be traced as formally beginning with Tony Blair’s ‘New’ Labour government of May 1997 – although much of the ground was prepared well in advance of this.

Jim McGuigan (1998) has usefully noted how the incoming Labour government had two dimensions to its approach to cultural policy. One was symbolic – a projection of a new mood but in reality a kind of regressive modernisation whose key symbol (until it became manifestly absurd and discredited) was the Millennium Dome at Greenwich. It was associated with marketing and public relations, treating the nation as though it were a brand. The other was ‘cultural policy proper’, central to which was the promotion of creative industries not only as an assertion of national identity but also as a key form of economic competition. In part the complex of ideas was a development of an earlier phase of Labour thinking, which had taken *cultural industries* to be a central instrument of economic and urban regeneration - a line that to some extent was also pursued by the Conservatives (McGuigan 1998: 71). It was at this moment that tropes were coined that - with minor modifications – have survived for nearly a decade of Labour rule. For instance, the idea of the UK as a ‘creative hub’ for the world economy as a whole is still in play.

Nicholas Garnham (2005) has argued that Labour Party policy was deeply influenced by the Thatcherism that preceded it. In particular, he sees creative industries

⁴ This is one aspect of the present project.

policy as an outcome of the espousal of ‘information society’ thinking and has traced the various influences that have been brought to bear. He suggests – entirely plausibly - that arguments about international competitiveness and deregulation have been carried through from the 1980s to the present day.

For sure, creative industries thinking has deeply influenced policy on broadcasting regulation and competition, film investment and training and education. Indeed, it goes beyond this to inform ideas of knowledge transfer between business and university and science policy more generally.

New Labour made the creative industries part of their pre-election economic strategy in the run-up to the May 1997 general election. In fact, it was then labelled the ‘cultural economy’, which was seen as a key and growing segment of the national economy and a place of comparative advantage. In 1997, the older idiom of the ‘cultural industries’ was being touted as offering a ‘creative base’ for the UK. We can see how this foreshadowed the melding of these ideas into ‘creative industries’. The range of activities then identified as relevant was to be formalised with what came later - the ‘mapping’ of the creative industries (Creigh-Tyte 2005: 159).

After the 1997 election, the Creative Industries Task Force was set up. This was intended to secure collaboration between government and industry, producing a context for sustainable growth in the creative industries (Creigh-Tyte 2005: 162). The two Creative Industries Mapping Documents of 1998 and 2001 gave what have now come to be known as the ‘creative industries’ their definitional scope. In 1998, in a lasting formulation, creative industries were defined as ‘those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property’. It went on:

‘These have been taken to include the following key sectors: advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and television and radio.’

The core purpose of the Task Force was ‘to recommend steps *to maximise the economic impact of the UK creative industries* at home and abroad’ (1998: 003; emphasis added).

The definition adopted has shaped the scope of subsequent thinking about what constitutes the creative industries. Inasmuch as these are cultural activities, they have been subordinated to an economic policy logic.

The *Mapping Documents* demonstrated New Labour's emphasis on how creative industries underpin the national economy and promote growth. Creigh-Tyte (2005: 158), however, suggests there are 'serious problems in providing valid assessments of the creative industries sectors from "official" sources, and that is despite the emphasis on so-called 'evidence based research at the heart of its [New Labour's] policy agenda'.⁵

Notwithstanding any problems of definition or of evidence, the pursuit of a creativity policy became a national project. In one respect, as noted, it was linked to the selling of politics through communications and media management. This had become an important feature of British politics from the end of the 1970s, under Margaret Thatcher's successive governments. It became central to the communications strategy of New Labour, when in opposition.⁶ If politics generally can be commodified, it follows that national identity is no different. National 'branding' of the UK as at the global cutting-edge was part of how New Labour wanted to position the British state. Such positioning was intended to give a comparative advantage to cultural production when it entered the global market place.

What characterises the early Labour period – and what has remained continuously in play since then – are two key features.

First, there is a vision of the UK as a *competitive nation* that has been linked to an idea of a knowledge economy (in which 'knowledge transfer' and 'upskilling' become more and more important). This has become particularly intense with the dawning realisation that the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China), are presenting an increasing threat to high-end 'creative' activities.

⁵ This criticism has been acknowledged to a certain extent, as is noted below in the discussion of the Creative Economy Programme.

⁶ For a brief discussion of mediated politics in the UK, and the present debate about a crisis of trust, see Schlesinger (2006).

Second, *government intervention* in the market, and also in the creation of conditions favourable to enhancing company performance, has been justified in order to secure the knowledge base.

What is noteworthy is that the elaboration of a framework for the enhancement of the creative industries increasingly seems to be leaching into other sectors, as ‘creativity’ becomes a *generalised value* in itself.⁷

In what follows, I want to move from the origins of the ‘creative industries’ discourse to its current elaboration into a doctrine by showing its pervasiveness and consistency in current governmental reports and initiatives.

Official reports: elaboration of a doctrine

Within the UK government, there has been a division of labour concerning the creative economy, which has figured in the work of several departments of state. We can note an *increasing consistency* in the elaboration and development of ideas and arguments at present, as well as *extensive cross-referencing* between reports currently being published.

The key ministries are the Treasury, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and to a lesser extent the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The Treasury is the UK government’s key spending department, and is headed by the Chancellor of Exchequer, Gordon Brown, in office from the very start of the New Labour period. Garnham (2006: 26) has noted the importance of ‘so-called “endogenous growth” theory which attributed the relative international competitiveness of nations and industries to the institutional structures supporting innovation, part of which was the provision of suitably trained human capital’. There is undoubtedly a detectable leitmotiv that accords with this.

⁷ In the academic context it is interesting to observe the rise of centres and departments devoted to the ‘creative industries’, tilling a terrain that has been largely defined by policy initiatives. In this connection, we should note the missionary activity of Australian policy research (led to a significant extent by British expatriates), which is increasingly being exported both to the UK and also to China and other parts of Asia. The Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence in Creative Industries at the Queensland University of Technology is a case in point.

Surrounding – and in this case supporting and legitimising - the efforts of government is a wider apparatus of ‘governance’. As Jean-Gustave Padioleau (2003: 183-184) has argued, this is where we should situate the growth of spaces for the so-called policy community to deploy arguments and make interventions, to enter into the game of influence through the production of reports, the setting up of committees, influencing the media, and so forth. The field of critical action, however, is asymmetrical: it requires resources. ‘The circles of specialist researchers are the official partners of the enterprise of governance.’ We are in the realm of what Padioleau (2003: 23) has called the ‘practical arts’ in which the meanings produced for public consumption are meant to be common, accessible, transmissible, and able both to guide and constrain conduct. They operate as a kind of formula. Furthermore, he suggests, it is not just a matter of airing one’s opinions but rather of providing convincing evidence and providing a new architecture for public action. The discourse of creativity fits into this analytical model.

Re-engineering businesses

It is certainly no accident that the Chancellor commissioned *The Cox Review*, which was published on 2 December 2005. In his foreword to the report, Sir George Cox, chairman of the Design Council, states that the key issue for ‘the UK’s long-term economic success’ is ‘how to exploit the nation’s creative skills more fully’ (Cox 2005: 1). The *Review* was strongly influenced by an awareness of the competitive standing of the ‘emerging economies’ and reflected yet another spin of the creativity wheel some eight years on from its first public outing. The Treasury’s work was supplemented by a paper from the DTI that argued for the positive impact of creativity in improving firms’ competitiveness.

The two key areas identified by Cox were ‘building a strong relationship between businesses and creative professionals, and strengthening the links across university departments and with industries’. A key policy focus were small to medium enterprises (SMEs) ‘which account for 50 per cent of UK Gross domestic product (GDP) and provide much of its entrepreneurial base’ (Cox 2005: 3). In essence, the recommendations came down to extensive consciousness raising in the boardroom, more networking between

diverse sectors, establishing links between universities and SMEs, and also using the media and university degree courses to develop, respectively, a general awareness of the benefits of creativity and creative specialists.

The *Cox Review* is one of the few current official documents in which an attempt is made to define the current dominant terminology, in the following words:

‘*Creativity*’ is the generation of new ideas - either new ways of looking at existing problems, or of seeing new opportunities, perhaps by exploiting emerging technologies or changes in markets.

‘*Innovation*’ is the successful exploitation of new ideas. It is the process that carries them through to new products, new services, new ways of running the business or even new ways of doing business.

‘*Design*’ is what links creativity and innovation. It shapes ideas to become practical and attractive propositions for users or customers. Design may be described as creativity deployed to a specific end. (Cox 2005: 2)

There is, therefore, a conceptual architecture that is potentially influential in setting out idealised relations between ideas, their exploitation and business practice. And this is not simply talk. We know, for instance, that the slogan about innovation as ‘the successful exploitation of ideas’ has become the mantra of the Office of Science and Innovation in the DTI and is therefore embedded in the policy apparatus, whence it apparently migrated via the recruitment of senior staff from the global design and business consulting firm, Ove Arup (personal communication, 5 May 2006).

The core of the argument is neatly set out in the Executive Summary to Cox’s *Review*. Creativity is a ‘connecting thread’; our ‘creative capabilities – one of the UK’s undoubted strengths – lie at the very core of our ability to compete’ (2005: 3). The *Review* is a wake-up call and pitched against the complacent assumption that the UK will necessarily retain its competitive advantage as an advanced economy against an emerging world that is catching up and even overtaking the country in the service industries.

Cox's purpose is to attack a compartmentalised mentality and to integrate design into the heart of business calculation. 'Creative businesses are creative throughout', he says. 'As well as being the path to new products and services, creativity is also the route to greater productivity, although it is not always recognised as such.' The route – we are told – is through 'higher-value products and services, better processes, more effective marketing, simpler structures or better use of people's skills' (2005: 3). Cox (2005: 4) intones a long-standing lament about the UK's strengths in scientific invention and the creative industries not being carried through 'into consistently world-beating products and services'. The limitations lie, variously, in a series of lacks: of awareness, confidence, ambition, risk-taking and clarity. The remedies lie in tackling each of these through public action such as new programmes, incentives for R&D, the formation of specialists, the use of procurement and networking (Cox 2005: 15).

Broadly speaking, therefore, the *Cox Review* uses a discourse that combines:

- an economic nationalism that recognises certain cultural virtues (considered here as creative capabilities) that are key to competition on the world stage; however, this is not a simple essentialist nationalist hurrah as 'it's dangerously complacent to think that the UK's creative capabilities are simply *an enduring national characteristic*' (Cox 2005: 13; emphasis added).

- a place for the state and its various agencies as enablers in creating a business climate conducive to greater competitiveness;

- a commitment to creativity as a fundamental attribute that is also a socio-economic resource but which requires a widespread cultural change across the field of production and consumption (Cox 2005: 40);

- a particular vision of an 'enterprise economy' in which creativity extends beyond particular industrial sectors or the domain of specialists to become a general feature of economic life, as summed up in the crucial mantra already cited but repeated in the report: 'Creative businesses are creative throughout.' (Cox 2005: 16)

Making education ‘creative’

While it is not exactly a seamless web, there are clearly links between Cox’s advocacy of a cultural change that embraces higher education and the current rethinking of the role of creativity in the broader educational domain. I take this as my second example and will first note the antecedent introduction of creativity doctrine into the educational field.

In September 1999, as part of the early wave of reviews instituted by the New Labour government, a report titled *All Our futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*, was published by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, chaired by Professor Ken Robinson of Warwick University, one of the UK’s home-grown creativity gurus.⁸ The report was commissioned in February 1998 by two ministries, the Department for Education and Employment, whose Secretary of State was then David Blunkett, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, whose Secretary of State was then Chris Smith. Smith (1998) had been one of the early articulators of the idea of a ‘creative Britain’ in his book of that name. The committee membership comprised educationists, artists, scientists and business people. The focus was on provision for young people in formal and informal education up the age of 16. The report was at least in part a response to policy-makers’ wish to ‘develop “human resources”, and in particular to promote creativity, adaptability and better powers of communication’ (NACCCE 1999: 9):

‘By creative education we mean forms of education that develop young people’s capacities for original ideas and action: by cultural education we mean forms of education that enable them to engage positively with the growing complexity and diversity of social values and ways of life.’ (NACCCE 1999: 6)

The Robinson report is not concerned with how intellection is connected to structured inequality and how it therefore may be used with diverse political consequences. Rather, it is concerned with bringing out the potential that lies within us all. According to *All Our Futures*, ‘All people have creative abilities and we all have them differently. When individuals find their creative strengths, it can have an enormous impact on self-esteem and

⁸ Ken Robinson (2001: 12) says he was asked to chair the national task group in 1997.

on overall achievement' (ibid: 6-7). The report was anxious to allay the idea that creativity was to be identified solely with the arts or with the achievements of elites and the gifted. To this is counterposed a 'democratic definition', namely that 'all people are capable of creative achievement in some area of activity'. There is an underlying commitment to social inclusiveness.⁹

We can see the affinity between the notion that *all* are possessed of creativity and the idea that in businesses *all* personnel should be creative or, at the very least, harnessed to supporting the creative endeavour of those specifically designated as 'creatives'.

A creative education, then, is one that 'involves a balance between teaching knowledge and skills, and encouraging innovation...the engine of cultural change is the human capacity for creative thought and action' (ibid: 7). The report continually stresses that this not a bending towards fashionable 1960s thinking but rather that a new balance is needed in the national curriculum, with more discretion for teachers. While the underlying conception is a liberal one that acknowledges that there are shortcomings in the curriculum, the demands of the job market are also fully in mind. In the 'new knowledge-based economies' workers with creative abilities – 'people who can adapt, see connections, innovate, communicate and work with others' are those that are wanted (ibid: 13).

Roberts and his committee took a self-conscious approach to a definition of creativity that they describe as both stipulative and indicative:

'Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value.' (ibid: 29)

The report appears to have been influential, with over 100,000 copies of the summary being distributed (Robinson 2001: 12). Its ideas set the context for the Creative Partnerships programme between a number of English schools and creative artists and cultural groups established for five years in 2002 (Hind, 2006)

⁹ This relates to a longstanding debate in the sociology of the intellectuals. We might contrast this eliminatin of class difference to Antonio Gramsci's view that that while we all must engage in some form of intellection, being an intellectual is a 'social function', which is restricted to a 'specialised category' of person (Gramsci 1971: 9-11). Of course, those remarks were made in the context of a vision of class struggle and the role of different kinds of intellectual in the battle for politico-cultural hegemony – quite at variance with seeking solutions through 'social inclusion'.

In his subsequent book, *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative*, Robinson shifts the goalposts somewhat, while retaining the essentials of the core argument about creativity. He builds on the arguments of *All Our Futures* but the focus moves to ‘a broader and longer view of creativity in business and in education’ (2001: 205) and the inflection is much more utilitarian and expressly focused on economic concerns, to which self-development is connected. While he still adheres to the view the ‘everyone has creative capacities’, it is now how these capacities become ‘the greatest resource available to an organisation’ that interests him, not least how a ‘systematic strategy to generate a culture of innovation across the whole organisation’ might be pursued (2001: 3). The book argues for a wholesale cultural change, not least in universities, in order to ‘recover people’s creative abilities’ (ibid: 4). Robinson’s premise is that there is presently a social and economic revolution that requires a new conception of human resources whose development needs appropriate strategies (2001: 4). And here, we can readily see how education and training hold at least one key to the government’s competitiveness agenda. The book is a critique of the limits of academicism: we need to look beyond formal credentials and realise everyone’s ‘creative potential’ (2001: 10). The argument is both socially inclusive and market-orientated.

The issue, according to this analysis, is how to develop the ‘right’ kinds of culture and Robinson is especially concerned to identify the conditions that make creativity possible in corporate settings – not least, in fostering ‘an atmosphere where risk-taking and experimentation are encouraged rather than stifled’ (2001: 12).

In terms very close to those of Cox, Robinson argues that ‘Corporate creativity should be understood as a systemic function of the organisation...A strategy to promote corporate creativity and innovation should engage all areas of the organisation’ (2001: 184). This requires a threefold approach: identifying abilities, facilitating them and employing them.

As ways ahead, in order to encourage the flow of ideas, Robinson advocates: interdisciplinarity, overcoming departmental boundaries, mixing different kinds of knowledge and expertise, and loosening up hierarchies. All of this implies a cultural change

‘where creative abilities are valued and harnessed to the organisational objectives’ (Robinson 2001: 194). In turn, this requires open-mindedness to experimentation and play and a refusal to be governed by short-termism and the bottom line. Change in companies’ and public organisations’ cultures presupposes changes ‘upstream’ in the education system, not least a recognition of the effects of the categorical systems used in schooling. ‘Creativity depends on interactions between thinking and feeling, and across different disciplinary boundaries and fields of ideas. New curricula must be evolved which are more permeable and which encourage a better balance between generative thinking and critical thinking in all modes of understanding’ (2001: 200). We have to move beyond linear rationalism, Robinson believes, and develop a new ecology of human resources.

These statements about the need to rethink the creative dimensions of the educational process in the late 1990s and early 2000s have subsequently been directly linked to ideas about how young people might be harnessed to the creative economy. *Nurturing Creativity in Young People*, was published in July 2006 and commissioned by the DCMS and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

A key inspirational role is attributed in the report to James Purnell, who as Minister for Creative Industries spoke at a conference of the think-tank, the Institute For Public Policy Research (IPPR) in June 2005. Purnell had previously worked for IPPR and had a track record of interest in communications policy and the creative industries. He set out an ambitious goal for the UK to become the ‘world’s creative hub’ and raised the question of ‘what more we can do to nurture young creative talent’ in the educational system and suggested that work was needed on ‘a clear set of assumptions which will help to inform the basis of our future policy on creativity’.

The resulting report, written by Paul Roberts, Director of Strategy for the Improvement and Development Agency, sets out to link education to ‘pathways into the Creative Industries’ (2006: 5). It bases itself on the DCMS’s original definition of the creative industries, cited above. It also takes its conception of creativity directly from Robinson’s 1999 report (2006: 12). The key proposals in the report include developing a ‘personal portfolio – a creative portfolio – incorporating both formal and informal

learning, with the learner at the centre. Established by peer review, hosted and promoted by the Creative Industries, physical or virtual in form, it would support personalised learning, assessment for learning and routes into the Creativity sector' (ibid: 7). Charles Leadbeater (a noted guru of the creative economy and an adviser to the Blair government) contributed the section on the creative portfolio.

The idea of giving recognition to the range of activities undertaken by young people outside school was linked with a comprehensive set of proposals for embedding creative activity into schoolwork, partnerships with practitioners, pathways to the creative industries and changes in frameworks and regulation to reinforce this shift. The report is intended to inform the next stage of the policy process.¹⁰

It is indeed an utterly self-referential universe, as the report's section on new pathways to creative industries bases itself on the *Cox Review's* invocation for the UK's business to become more competitive and indeed largely paraphrases it in introducing the issue. This part was written by Tom Bewick, Chief Executive of Cultural and Creative Skills, the sector skills council set up to develop training and business skills in a wide range of creative industries. A key proposal made by Bewick is that of an apprenticeship model and other ways of linking secondary qualifications to the market place – but there is criticism of the lack of 'a support infrastructure in which creative careers can be enhanced or sustained over the long term' (2006: 59).

The Creative Economy Programme

My third, and last, example is that of the Creative Economy Programme, a series of investigations and reports under the aegis of the Culture department, the DCMS. The creative economy has been high on the UK public agenda. Particular governmental interest was signalled by the conference on the theme in London launched by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell, in October 2005. Her audience was drawn from across the European Union. Jowell used the occasion to generalise - for the EU as a

¹⁰ Some of this thinking has clearly been implemented in the so-called Creative Partnerships in English schools. See the supplement titled 'Creative thinkers', *Education Guardian*, 3 October 2006.

whole - an argument already exceedingly familiar in the UK. Noting the global competition faced by the EU, especially that coming from China and India, Jowell (2005: 1-2) took the line that would be taken only a couple of months later in the *Cox Review*:

‘We need to concentrate our efforts on where our strengths lie – in adding value through innovation and creativity...If we don’t increase our pace of innovation and investment, it will only be a matter of time before Europe’s position in the global economy is surpassed.’

Jowell enumerated some key tasks: ‘the digitization of our cultural heritage’, companies investing in ‘best design practice’, an improved European regulatory environment, a ‘strong and fair’ intellectual property regime. In another maxim coined to join those others that generalise the value of creativity, she said: ‘Every industry must look to become a creative industry, in the broadest sense of the word’ (2005: 3).

In November 2005, just after the London conference, Jowell’s department, the DCMS, launched the Creative Economy Programme. The department set up 7 working groups. Their composition reflected the established practice throughout the entire development of creative industries policy of relying on a relatively small coterie of advisers. For instance, Tom Bewick, Chief Executive of Creative Skills (and involved in the Roberts report) was enlisted as a member of the Ministerial high-level panel.¹¹

The mapping approach initiated in the early days of New Labour has been continued in the Creative Industries Programme, which the government has described as ‘the first step in achieving our goal of making the UK the world’s creative hub’. Its central purpose is to raise consciousness and assess the value of public systems and programmes. Each working group has produced a report. The designated areas were: infrastructure; competition and intellectual property; access to finance and business support; education and skills; diversity; technology; evidence and analysis.

¹¹ A list of those chairing the 7 panels and other relevant documentation may be found on the DCMS website: www://cep.culture.gov.uk.

In the space available, we can at best take a couple of examples to illustrate current thinking and here we shall focus on the reports of the Infrastructure Working Group and the Evidence and Analysis Group.

In the discussion of infrastructure, we find that ideas first mooted in the 1970s and 1980s are making a comeback but in a different context. The keywords used are ‘global competitiveness’ (an orientation to the world economy), ‘convergence’ (making links across separate activities and boundaries) and ‘stimulation’ (CEP, 2006a: 4). This last is linked to the development of ‘core cities’ – once a nostrum at the heart of municipal cultural policy in an earlier era of Labour Party thinking (Hesmondhalgh 2005). Once again, these are lauded as showing the way ahead. ‘Creative hubs’ have replaced ‘clusters’ as the ‘in’ phrase but the fundamental idea is the same. In both, the ‘significance of place as the main driver of creativity in the UK’ (CEP 2006a: 7) is underlined. London and the South East are seen as the key locus to which all other creative centres need to be more effectively linked. Competition with the BRIC countries – signalled by the Chancellor and in countless reports – is presented as the spur to action. The UK ‘needs to reposition itself as the knowledge broker of the global creative economy’ (CEP 2006a: 5). Indeed, to seek global recognition, a World Creative Economy Forum is bruted.

To bring together the necessary capabilities, a *rationalising structure* is required – namely the so-called ‘Creative Grid’, described as the key recommendation, which is seen as having three key elements. First, it draws together ‘web-based intelligence’ on the entire UK creative industries scene. Second, to secure the strategic goals for culture and creativity in the policy machinery, a ‘cross-departmental creativity working group’ is needed in government along with a ‘core cities creativity working group’. And third, a policy of ‘developing a creative milieu in creative places’ is advocated (some of this is redolent of the *Cox Review*); ensuring ‘a ready supply of talent’ and acting as the ‘world’s creative broker’ are additional actions proposed (ibid: 6); and ensuring that the various spaces that nurture creativity interact with the agencies that might facilitate development of the creative economy.

We can see here a familiar mix of solutions already in play for the past two decades. Other working group reports focus on the need to reform business practices, cross-refer to the Roberts report, and emphasise the importance of skills development.

Of all the working parties, we might judge the Evidence and Analysis Group to be of particular interest as it represents an effort within government to assess its *own* needs for policy formulation. It is led internally from within the DCMS by the department's Chief Economist, Paula Crofts.¹² Given that New Labour incessantly proclaims the importance of 'evidence-led policy', the group's focus on data and evidence to establish competitiveness, what data needs to be gathered and how the DCMS uses statistics is entirely consistent with the government's established approach. The underlying concern of the Evidence and Analysis Group is to secure the information needed to identify trends and emerging issues and to see how government policy might be rationalised. Significantly, too, it is also accepted that the DCMS's mapping documents are not detailed enough for understanding how the creative industries work (2006a: 13).

Perhaps one of the more significant recommendations concerns a framework for developing crosscutting policy, which brings a three-fold distinction to the broad agglomeration that has been defined as the creative industries for the past decade. In the present review, production, services, and arts and crafts are each distinguished as groupings with their own characteristics within the creative industries, although it is recognised that there are overlaps (2006b: 2-4). At the same time, the DCMS's research has evidently confirmed that SMEs are still the key locus of creative activity and there is an interest in their remaining relatively small to function effectively. However, this effectiveness depends on the development of business support, networks and mentoring (2006b: 11). Such policy has to combine intervention for economic growth, regional growth and regeneration and cultural policy purposes.

¹² 'The Evidence and Analysis Group has been led in-house at DCMS by the economics team, and populated by researchers and analysts from NDPBs [non-departmental public bodies], other government departments, sector skills councils, RDAs [regional development agencies] and industry bodies' (CEP 2206b: 13).

The Creative Economy Programme, while reflecting present concern at shortcomings in performance in the sector, and also the desire within government to devise better measures, does *not* question the existence of the creative industries as a category. Nevertheless, perhaps one significant straw in the wind is the start of the process of distinguishing between three aspects of the sector by the Evidence and Analysis Group. But that does not, of itself, offer a fundamental critique, but rather accepts the object of analysis as given. At present, therefore we find that creativity as a doctrine carries all before it.

Taking one's distance

The present essay is not intended to review the literature nor is this the place for a fundamental conceptual critique of the doctrine of creativity. Rather, its modest goal has been to demonstrate how several distinct objects of policy have become interrelated by the emergent doctrine of creativity. In addition to this, I have sought to show how, as policy thinking unrolls and gathers up wider circles of adherents by involving them in consultations or in conscripting them to the cause, the system of ideas has gained further currency and has been more fully elaborated. If the doctrine has undergone refinements, these have been conducted from within the tent.

Very few voices are presently being raised in public, even in mild criticism (although our initial fieldwork has suggested that some of the key actors in the sector well understand the expedient nature of needing to sign up to creativity as a mobilising clarion-call). One dissenting voice has been that of Professor Geoffrey Crossick (2006: 40), writing as the head of Goldsmiths College London, a creative arts university. Crossick was the Chief Executive who transformed the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) into the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), bringing it within the UK government's overall science policy apparatus, which runs the research councils. With this change of status, the arts and humanities became more explicitly governed by ideas of knowledge transfer – and closer to the priorities of the policy machinery - than before. On the basis of a well-informed view of government thinking, therefore, Crossick has argued that in the rush to 'secure the economic benefits of research' a simplistic and uniform

model of knowledge transfer has been imposed on how universities relate to businesses.¹³ What is needed, he has gone on to suggest, are not models for knowledge transfer but rather ‘spaces for interactions’.

Rather disparagingly, he has asked:

‘What is this thing called “creativity”, other than a mantra to be repeated by a government that knows the creative industries are important, doesn’t grasp what creativity and knowledge are within them and senses that the excitement to be found there can be extracted, trained for and then deployed to benefit the economy as a whole?’

Whatever his reservations may be, Crossick still does not disavow the language of creative industries. Rather he replaces the attempt to regulate and manage the conditions for creativity with the liberal-romantic idea of a happening-space. Such circumscribed dissent shows that it remains difficult to escape the tentacular embrace of current doctrine without stepping completely outside it to develop an intellectual critique of its origins and by seeking to provide an alternative theory of cultural production, distribution and consumption.

Where next?

While the increasing elaboration of a consistent practical governmental policy on ‘creativity’ is plainly of interest as an animating ideology for the so-called digital age, there is an important distinction to be made between the following: i. developing the broad sweep of policy thinking; ii. identifying specific solutions to particular problems; and iii. carrying through ideas about creativity in the practice of organisations.

The Creative Economy Programme, with its central idea of a Creative Grid, is a new attempt to rationalise inter-departmental cooperation, the flow of business

¹³ He is far from alone in thinking this, and this sceptical view is present within some business circles. At a meeting that I attended on ‘knowledge transfer’, held at HM Treasury in London on 19 May 2006, it was clear that participants could not agree on any single model of how the relationship between universities and businesses functions or indeed how it ought to function. Observation at this meeting and others suggests that while government policy may be a point of departure for debate, there are many approaches in practice and models of policy intervention do meet with widespread scepticism, although necessary lip-service is paid to them.

intelligence, networking, dispersed creative clusters, to foster talent and hence to make the UK a global creative broker.

Ultimately, carrying this through will be a matter of successful macro-organisational design. What becomes interesting - in the light of such design - is how ideas about creativity and innovation become organisationally embedded and shape the actual *management* of creative practice.

As it proceeds further, our research will aim to analyse this process by focusing on two key organisations operating in the broadcasting and film sectors, whose strategies are differently framed by government policy - namely, the BBC and the UK Film Council.¹⁴ But that is the topic of another paper.

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