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PROVOCATION

# CULTURAL POLICY IN THE TIME OF THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

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We suggest that the conflation of culture with creative industries since 1997 has harmed both cultural policy and creative industries policy in the UK. We propose that an official definition of the cultural sector and the production of government statistics to support such a definition will help to clarify creative industries policy and create a much needed opportunity to revisit the scope and nature of cultural policy.

For some, focusing on getting classification and measurement right is to tinker at the edges of more profound and meaningful matters in the deep human story of culture and creativity. However, consider that in the creative industries, classification and measurement over almost now two decades has contributed to healthy – albeit fraught – debates and productive outcomes on a range of topics critical to contemporary public policy. The ability to measure the relationship between creativity and information and communication technologies (Garnham, 2005) has given rise to distinctively UK initiatives like Next Gen and to the emergence of ICT curriculum reform in English schools (Nesta, 2011). Rigorous data and measurement underpinning the role of craft in creativity (Banks, 2010; Jakob and Thomas, 2015) has given crafts a renewed voice in ongoing debates about creativity and the future of work (Crafts Council, 2014). And developing the statistical evidence for the distinction between the creative industries and the creative economy has shown that the economic stakes for the UK are much higher than the fate of individual industries (Creative Industries Federation, 2015).

Now, with the recent government *Culture White Paper*, there is an historic opportunity to develop equally influential classifications and metrics for the cultural industries. The *Culture White Paper* commits the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to produce new ‘cultural GVA’, ‘cultural employment’ and ‘cultural exports’ statistics. In the first such white paper published by a UK government in over 50 years, these commitments could turn out to be the document’s most significant long-term contribution.

Our belief is that if government begins to classify and publish statistics on cultural industries – which David Hesmondhalgh (2012) defines as those industries primarily involved in the mass production, circulation and consumption of symbolic texts – alongside its Creative Industries Economic Estimates, it could lead – just as was the case with the creative industries – to important debates and cultural advance. It could bring to greater prominence such matters as the scope of the cultural sector as recognised by government (Miles and Sullivan, 2012); who cultural policy is being made for, and who is making it (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016)); what counts as cultural participation (O’Hagan, 2016), and the importance of cultural economy vs cultural industries (the so-called ‘culturalization’ of the economy, Lash and Urry, 1994).

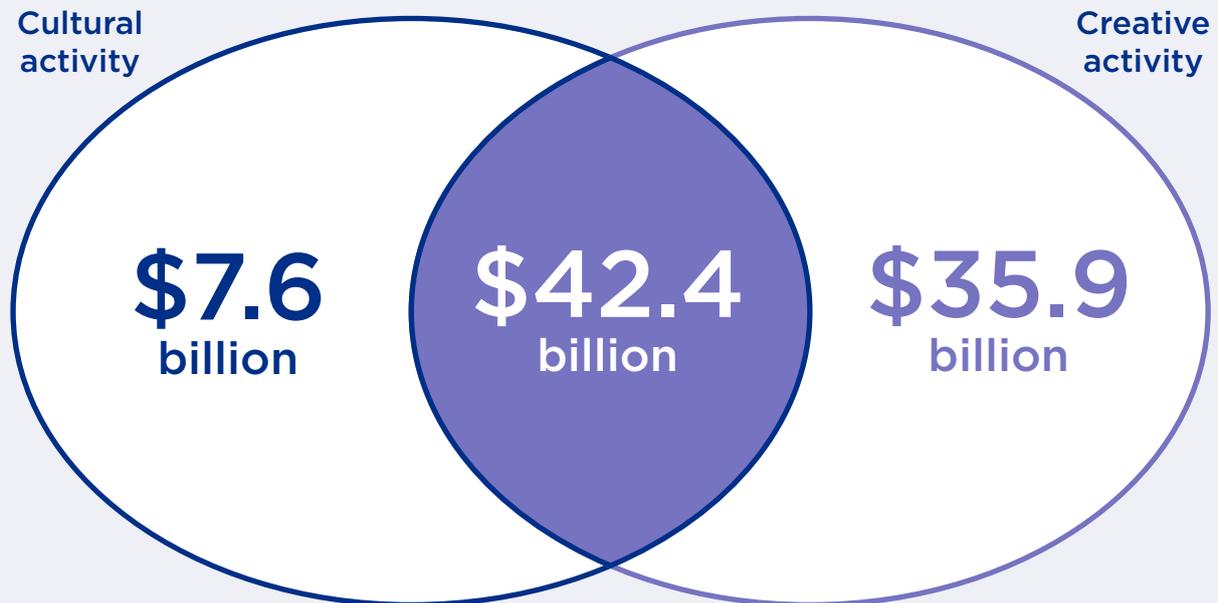
## Classification and measurement can take us to new places

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What would help are official statistics which allow both cultural and creative activity to be taken full account of, acknowledging both the substantial overlap between the two areas of activity, as well as dealing as best as possible with well understood challenges that tend to underestimate the extent of cultural activity (for example, the extent of voluntary labour in the cultural sector).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Cultural and Creative Activity Experimental Satellite Accounts point to one way forward. So-called ‘satellite accounts’ are extractions and recombinations of data from national accounts designed to capture emerging industry sectors which are not currently “*identified as an industry or product in international statistical standards*” (ABS 2008). Such accounts “*allow an expansion of the national accounts for selected areas of interest while maintaining the concepts and structures of the core accounts*” (ABS 2008, quoted in Cunningham, 2014). In other words, they help official statisticians keep abreast of industry change.

## Australia's Cultural and Creative Activity, 2008-9



*"This measurement of the economic contribution of cultural and creative activity is built up from four components:*

1. *Activity in the industries which form supply chains for cultural and creative goods and services;*
2. *Activity in other industries performed by workers in cultural and creative occupations;*
3. *Volunteer services to arts and heritage organisations; and*
4. *Non-market output of market producers in the cultural and/or creative industries – this captures the value of goods and services supplied by non-profit institutions for free, or at prices that are not economically significant, because the production is supported by charitable contributions and other transfers.*

*The first and second components of the satellite accounts can be compared with Australian national accounts aggregates, such as Gross Domestic Product, as these activities fall within the national accounts production boundary and are measured on a consistent basis. These components are described as being on a 'national accounts basis'.*

*The third and fourth components of the satellite accounts are an extension beyond the national accounts production boundary and are therefore not directly comparable with national accounts aggregates. These extensions provide a more complete picture of the value of cultural and creative activity to society than is evident in the estimates on a national accounts basis. These extensions are also made in the ABS' Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account (cat. no. 5256.0), which is based on the United Nations' Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts. The estimates including these components are described as being on a 'satellite accounts basis'."*

[www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/EF5E2547EC51F5AACA257C78000C1B53/\\$File/52710\\_2008-09.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/EF5E2547EC51F5AACA257C78000C1B53/$File/52710_2008-09.pdf)

By having two sets of definitions and statistics from government alongside each other, it will also force us to think about the possible tensions between the cultural and creative industries, and more generally the relationship between culture and creativity, addressing a longstanding concern of critics of the creative industries concept like Kate Oakley and Justin O'Connor, who argue that *“when it is simply a question of ‘creativity’ any tension between cultural and economic logics disappears.”* (Oakley and O'Connor, 2015).

That tension certainly should be regarded as productively constitutive of the cultural and creative industries, but let us not fall for the parochialism of believing these sectors are exceptional in this regard. Education and research – just to take two central pillars of modern societies and public policy – are both constituted by tensions between non-economic ideals and precepts and the ways they can be measured using methods from economics. Indeed, it is arguable that all public policy – given that it is dedicated to deciding how to direct limited public resources to potentially unlimited human needs – is constituted by some tension between social and economic value.

William Davies (2014) argues that the *“positivist social sciences, along with various forms of ‘governmentality’ and statistics, seem to replace critique with technique, judgement with measurement, but they are constantly parasitical on higher order claims about what ought to be measured, and how it is legitimate to represent this objectively.”* (page 16). We agree with Davies that statistics are not value-free. But we depart from him in arguing that it is precisely classification and measurement of cultural activity that will stimulate critique and debate about the judgements of policymakers as compared with others. That is, measurement need not be *“antipath[etic] towards normative and political discourse”* (page 19); it can positively enable it.

## The first cultural policy for 20 years

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More generally, having separate cultural and creative industries statistics will permit the long overdue formulation of a cultural policy in the UK, alongside an economic policy – which is what creative economy policy might then more properly be understood to be (Bakhshi, Hargreaves and Mateos-Garcia, 2013).

Looking back at the past 20 years, we believe that the introduction of an explicit definition of the creative industries in 1998 and their systematic measurement since 2002 with no equivalent effort for cultural industries, has contributed to a conflation of creative industries and cultural policy in the UK. It's not difficult to see how this state of affairs has come about. Cultural interests have benefited from their blurring with the creative industries, insofar as it has allowed them to take credit – directly or indirectly – for the £87 billion in GVA generated by the creative industries (Bob and Roberta Smith, 2014), when in fact as much as 43.5 per cent of it is accounted for by 'IT, software and computer services' alone. And the GREAT Britain campaign reminds us how Britain's creative industries like nothing better than to be associated with the arts and culture.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the mutual benefits, however, the conflation between creative industries and cultural policy has, we argue, been detrimental to the UK's interests. It has meant that insufficient attention has been paid in economic policy to the biggest drivers of creative industries growth which, notwithstanding important economic spillovers from the arts, are largely in service sectors like software, advertising and design, and it has meant that inadequate attention has been given to the cultural reasons for promoting the cultural wellbeing of the nation.

The creative industries critics are adamant that, if we can just 'take a breather from creative industries' (Westwood 2016), and imagine what is possible 'after' creative industries (O'Connor 2016), we will travel to sunny uplands where we can deal with cultural value unencumbered by an untoward economism.

In fact, contemporary cultural policies must continue to attempt to take the economic benefits of culture seriously, while at the same time dealing with a widening range of further entanglements based on the undeniable role that culture plays in social inclusion, technological diffusion, and even health (whether the impacts are positive or negative). No contemporary cultural policy can go back to an arts-only focus, and this is a position supported – either tactically or in principle – by most arts advocates.

The effort to establish a national cultural policy for the 21st century in Australia was led by an experienced senior Labor Minister, Simon Crean (one of us was a member of the Minister's advisory board). This is what he wanted from his exhaustive policy process: *“‘joining the dots’, bringing culture into contact with the ‘education revolution’, with technology and innovation, and with its role in binding the social fabric of the nation”*. Launched in early 2013, the policy's<sup>2</sup> implementation was derailed by the fall of the government a few months later. Defeated in implementation, the policy nevertheless stood tall in principle.

In contemplating what a contemporary cultural policy might look like, the debate usually shifts to the intrinsic versus instrumental binary. This is quite a bit different from the culture versus economy binary, and it is a whole lot messier, because what gets opposed to the intrinsic value of culture is multi-form in nature – economic value is only one vector. Taking a ‘breather’ from the creative industries may mean moving into even more, albeit necessarily contested territory. Evidence for the relations between culture and social inclusion, technological diffusion and health need to be marshalled.

Before that, however, a whole battery of cultural exclusions has to be confronted. In particular, the Warwick Commission (one of us was a Commissioner) cited statistics derived from the DCMS's Taking Part survey showing that the wealthiest, well-educated and least ethnically diverse 8 per cent of the population formed the most culturally active segment of the English population. Between 2012 and 2015, they accounted for over a quarter of attendances at live theatre and visits to art galleries (Warwick Commission, 2015). David Jubb (2016), Artistic Director at Battersea Arts Centre, points out that even the way we talk about the arts places them on a pedestal, noting that we don't talk about The Heritage or The Sports in the way we talk about The Arts.

At the same time, new cultures struggle to gain legitimation in the eyes of funders. There have been a good many studies since Naseem Khan's landmark report in 1976 (Khan, 1976) pointing out the under-representation of minority groups in the publicly funded arts. Our reading of Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) and Major Partner Museum (MPM) portfolio shows that 1.0 per cent of funds are allocated to South Asian arts (excluding venues), whereas these ethnic groups account for around 5.5 per cent of the population.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps a healthier state of affairs would see such art accounting for well in excess of 5.5 per cent, on the grounds that it is of disproportionate importance to the vitality of British culture.

Take another example, in video games. In a forthcoming paper with Karol Borowiecki at the University of Southern Denmark, one of us again uses Taking Part data, this time to look at how playing video games fits in with the other cultural participation habits of the English public. The Taking Part survey has not in the past included questions on video games, but the 2014/15 survey included a number of questions on the incidence and frequency of playing video games. It turns out that the responses are quite interesting. People who play video games are significantly more – not less – likely to engage in other active cultural pursuits such as reading, photography and drawing and – in common with traditional cultural activities – exposure to games when people are young very significantly influences games playing behaviour when they are old (Bakhshi and Borowiecki, forthcoming).

Despite this, it is still most unusual for policymakers to recognise the cultural value of video games. Lottery funding for video games development remains a distant prospect. And it would be a brave educator indeed who wanted to make use of video games in the classroom on the grounds of their cultural value – contrast that with, say, film, the visual arts or music.

These examples underline a broader point, that the UK has not had a consistent cultural policy for at least two decades. And this despite the fact that the UK has been blessed over that time with having a government department with the word ‘culture’ in its title. Arguably, cultural policy has consisted of discrete interventions: cultural tax reliefs, public investment in the Arts Councils and other arm’s length bodies, free entry to national museums, National Lottery funding, ongoing – albeit at times vulnerable – support for public service broadcasting, and one-off activities like the Cultural Olympiad and the WW1 Centenary.

These are all very significant commitments by the British state to culture – the envy of cultural sectors the world over – and in no small part down to the UK having a Department for Culture, Media and Sport. However, they have coincided with a systematic de-commitment by other parts of the government to our cultural life, to public libraries and other local cultural institutions, following withdrawal of local authority support in the face of major cuts in budgets from central government, and – of even greater concern – to cultural education in schools (at least in England).

In the area of arts funding specifically, for a democratic and dynamic society like the UK’s it is striking how, in many ways, constant policy has been. Take the following quote from Jennie Lee’s White Paper in 1965 (page 15):

*“... it is true that much will have been achieved when many more people have become acquainted with the arts and have come to realise the interest and enjoyment that can lie in well-written books, good plays, more demanding programmes on radio and television, concerts of serious music and exhibitions of great pictures.”*

That sounds a lot like *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (Arts Council England, 2013) to us. In their recent report on cultural value for the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska note that ‘the best for the most’ had been the slogan devised by the publicity manager at the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), the forerunner of the Arts Council (Weingartner, 2006 quoted in Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016).

But, given that the state currently does not explain in clear terms what it means by culture, is it any surprise that publicly funded culture is disconnected from the public? An interesting new Arts Council England-commissioned report by 64 Million Artists finds that “Definitions of culture, creativity and the arts are perceived to be one of the most significant barriers to people participating in creative practice.” (64 Million Artists/Arts Council England, 2016.) What might Britain’s arts and cultural sector look like if we had a more critical discussion in policymaking on culture’s scope? What contributions might we see the arts and culture making to the big social issues of the day?

To be clear, we are not advocating a ‘big brother’ approach to culture or challenging the arm’s length principle that underpins arts funding in the UK. Rather, we are suggesting that delineating with statistical rigour the nature of the cultural sector, may clear the way for a cultural policy to begin to address the knotty relations between cultural activity and human wellbeing and associated social, educational and health outcomes.

Crossick and Kaszynska give us a taste of how much more cultural value society might derive if a more inclusive set of activities were considered within scope, and a broader group of individuals be considered cultural practitioners or artists, worthy of recognition and public support. Looking forensically at the components of cultural value, Crossick and Kaszynska devolve them into the accrual to the ‘reflective individual’, and the benefits accruing to civic agency and engagement, community vitality, the economic benefits of ‘livability’ and innovation, health, ageing and wellbeing, and arts-based learning in formal education.

Crossick and Kaszynska insist that any accounting for cultural value must include “*not only the subsidised cultural sector but also the commercial, amateur and participatory which, after all, are where most people find their cultural engagement*”. This means that cultural value is being created “*not just in publicly-funded concert halls, art galleries, theatres and museums, important as these are; but also commercial film, music and literature; young people getting together in a band, amateur choirs, local art clubs and reading groups, and people crafting at home or in local clubs; as well as those engaging in prisons, hospitals and care homes*”. The report notes there is much to redress as “*Black, Asian and minority ethnic cultural practice and consumption have been particularly marginalised when discussing cultural value and participation*”.

There are enough evidence-related, including statistical, challenges here to keep a culture department and cultural policy analysts busy for some time. The introduction of transparent government classifications and statistics for the cultural sector could, we contend, clear the way for more informed debate and to start to address the challenges.

## A new commitment to cultural classification and measurement

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As we noted earlier, the *Culture White Paper* sets out a new commitment from government to produce ‘cultural GVA’, ‘cultural employment’ and ‘cultural exports’ statistics (*Culture White Paper* pp 59-61), reflecting the UK’s obligations as a member of the European Statistical System – the arrangement by which Eurostat, the European Commission Directorate General charged with collating and publishing EU statistics, aims to foster European harmonisation (see ESSNet, 2012). In undertaking these technical obligations, we hope, the DCMS will be opening up more fundamental debates of policy.

To conclude, some parts of the cultural sector, and significant parts of the academic commentariat, have over the years expressed ongoing reservations about the so-called economism and statistical mono-focus attending policies around the creative industries. With the potentially historic attention to providing a statistical definition of the cultural sector coming into view, it may now be timely for the category errors and unproductive slanging matches that characterise too much debate about the creative industries to be set aside, and for cultural policy to step up too for closer inspection.

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