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# Creative Industries and the Politics of New Labour

Kate Oakley

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Submitted to City University, London, as part of the  
requirements for a PhD by Prior Publication.

March 2010

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Kate Oakley

## **Declaration**

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## Acknowledgements

Any PhD is no doubt a collaborative enterprise, but especially one like this, which draws on many years of work, and is the fruit of conversation with friends, colleagues and clients – and some who are all three. For that particular mix of contest and comradeship, so vital to a good working experience, I would very much like to thank: Ian Christie, Charles Leadbeater, Tom Bentley, Mark Hepworth, John Fisher, Andy Lovatt, Paul Owens, Jo Burns, Tom Campbell, Richard Naylor, Colin Kirkpatrick, Lucy Mantella, Graham Hitchen, Michelle Reeves, Danny Meaney, Eddie Berg, Tom Fleming, Andrew Erskine, Stuart Cunningham, John Hartley, Toby Miller, Andy Pratt, Calvin Taylor, Mark Banks, Ros Gill, Dave Hesmondhalgh, David Lee, John Knell, Will Davies, Max Nathan, James Crabtree, Lily Kong, Xin Gu, Mirko Petric, Lisa Andersen, Richard Holt, Dani Salvadori, Hasan Bakhshi, Brooke Sperry, George Yudice, Rick Maxwell, Andrew Ross, Bas van Heur, Julian Sefton-Green, and John Newbiggin.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the development of policy towards the creative industries in the UK in the period 1997–2008. It argues that this can be seen in the light of New Labour's understanding of the knowledge economy, an understanding that influenced its development of education and social policy, as well as economic policy. It thus provides a unique insight into New Labour politics in general.

The thesis asserts that New Labour's account of the knowledge economy was a deterministic one, which took its cue from what it believed to be long-term social and economic trends. In this, it is consistent with other critiques of New Labour politics, which argue that it can be seen as a development of prevailing neoliberal ideas (Hay 1999; Thompson 2002; Finlayson 2003; Clarke 2004); but in this case, I argue, it is a variety of neoliberalism that is heavily influenced by institutionalism (Bevir 2005). The importance of institutionalist ideas can be seen in the emphasis in creative industries policy on networks, characterised by social and ethical norms, as opposed to a neoliberal focus purely on marketisation.

New Labour produced an essentially benign account of the knowledge economy; the creative industries were capable of producing 'good work', which offered opportunities for highly skilled labour. In addition, because of its links to popular culture, they could offer inclusion through work, for those deemed socially excluded.

I argue that this account continued throughout the period under examination, despite mounting evidence, discussed in several of the publications below, that the creative industries produce labour markets that are highly unequal in terms of race and class. It is in attitudes to the labour market that the failures of New Labour's creative industries policy can be seen most sharply. The roots of that failure, and what it tells us about New Labour's creative industries policy, is the subject of the thesis.

# 1. Introduction

The publications collected here, together with the commentary, investigate the development of New Labour<sup>1</sup> creative industries policy over the period 1997–2008. At the time of writing, the New Labour government is still in office and the creative industries a live discourse,<sup>2</sup> but in order to impose some structure on the commentary, I have chosen these dates, which take us from the election of New Labour in 1997 to the publication of *Creative Britain* and its immediate aftermath (DCMS 2008).<sup>3</sup>

As Hesmondhalgh (2005:96) has commented, not only are media and other forms of cultural policy rarely considered together, but what often seems to be forgotten is that 'these are areas of public policy more generally'. This thesis examines creative industries policy as *public policy* and seeks to relate it to the politics of New Labour in general, and particularly to its view on what came to be called the knowledge economy (Lash and Urry 1994; Department of Trade and Industry 1998; Jessop 2002; Thrift 2005; Cruddas 2006).

This, I argue, developed as an over-arching account of not only economic but also social changes, which New Labour used as the basis for its creative industry policies (see Section 5). The publications presented here discuss some of the failings of those policies (see Oakley 2004a, 2006, 2009a, 2009c), and this commentary reflects on the relationship between those failings and New Labour's understanding of the knowledge economy.

As this is a PhD by prior publication, I have selected those publications which I feel best articulate this narrative. The publications were not originally intended to be part of a PhD submission, and therefore sometimes deal with material outside the primary argument of my thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> I have used the term 'New Labour' to refer to the government of 1997–2010, while recognising that this is not the official name of the British Labour Party. Nonetheless, 'New Labour' is politically significant, as Tony Blair articulated after the General Election in May 1997, when he said, 'we ran for office as new Labour, we will govern as new Labour'. When used by Labour politicians, the term is often associated with an appeal to middle-class voters, as when used by Gordon Brown in early 2010. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8462887.stm>, retrieved 23 February 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Having said this, 'retrospectives' are already being published, such as the 2009 special issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, entitled 'After the Creative Industries'.

<sup>3</sup> Several of the academic publications referred to here, including my own, were published in 2009, but refer to these slightly earlier dates. DCMS refers to Department for Culture, Media and Sport, throughout.

This commentary seeks to do two things: to give an account of my own work and its development, and thus to place it within the discourse of creative industries; and to provide a theoretical account of the relationship between these publications, which deal with the creative industries, and New Labour politics. The rest of Section 1 deals primarily with definitional issues, as a way of clearing the ground before stating the hypothesis in Section 2.

Section 3 explores with my own background and role in the creative industries. This is necessary in a PhD by prior publication, where claims about originality and contribution to knowledge rest, to some degree, on the writer's role in the discourse, including responses to their work.

Section 4 looks at how the creative industries are articulated in official policy statements, academic research and grey literature.<sup>4</sup> As one of the publications submitted is a literature review (Oakley 2009b), and other publications (e.g., Oakley 2009a) cover the relevant literature, there is less coverage of academic literature in this commentary than may otherwise be the case in a PhD by publication commentary.

Sections 5 and 6 present the case for linking the creative industries to New Labour's account of the knowledge economy and, as such, form the core argument of the commentary and the thesis overall.

Section 7 briefly discusses the publications submitted, their provenance and criteria for inclusion.

Section 8 deals with the implications of this research and the direction of my future research in the field.

Section 9 comprises the publications themselves.

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<sup>4</sup> The term 'grey literature' refers to literature found outside conventional publishing channels. In this instance, it refers to the large number of strategies, research papers, think-pieces and advocacy documents produced on the creative industries, often by consultants, many of which are unpublished. It does not cover all policy publications, some of which are published by TSO/HMSO.

## 1.1 Definitions

Writing about creative industries policy can be fraught with terminological inexactitude and shifting meanings (Schlesinger 2009a), so it is necessary to clarify the use of terms where possible.

'Policy' can be thought of as consisting of a number of different techniques, including legislation, regulation and funding. This is an approach I have adopted from Jessop's work on what he calls 'cultural political economy' (Jessop 2005), which I find helpful in understanding creative industries policy because of the variety of state and non-state actors involved, and the importance of social relations between them. In keeping with this, I do not distinguish between 'policy' as a set of statements and 'implementation' as a set of actions, believing that both are structured by a set of beliefs. These beliefs may, of course, differ over time and produce different emphases, but those differences are not explained by the distinction between policy and implementation.

Unlike some areas of cultural policy, such as broadcasting, creative industries policy has consisted largely of funding decisions and the creation of new agencies, networks and partnerships, or what Jessop calls 'the organisation of the conditions for self-organisation' (Jessop 2005:159). 'Policymakers' can therefore refer to those in central government charged with developing policy statements, and those in the plethora of regional and local agencies responsible for advice and implementation.

By 'knowledge economy' I mean the by-now commonplace notion that the generation of new ideas and knowledge is the key to competitiveness in developed economies. It is sometimes referred to as a knowledge-based economy. Other cognate terms such as information society, network society and new economy have at various times been used to cover much the same ground. There are subtle differences between these notions, but what they have in common is that they can be seen as a response to the post-war crisis in Fordist production and the Keynesian welfare state (Jessop 2002). Creative Industries, as I will argue, were seen by New Labour as an archetypal knowledge economy sector, because of their dependence on new ideas and highly skilled labour.

Also important for this thesis is Jessop's argument (2002) that knowledge economies are characterised by a tight coupling of social and economic policy, which often subordinates social policy to the demands of a flexible and enterprising workforce, or

as I will argue in this case, sees these interests as one and the same (see Sections 5.5 and 6, below).

The term 'creative industries' properly applies to the 13 creative industry sectors, so designated by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS 1998).<sup>5</sup> The omission of important areas of publicly funded cultural provision, such as museums, libraries and the heritage sector, has been noted (Selwood 2002). But in practice, at the level of local authorities or regional development agencies (RDAs), libraries, museums and heritage were often involved in policy discussions (DCMS 2004, 2007, 2008; SHIPs 2008).<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the term 'cultural industries' continues to be used, particularly in academia, though it is often taken to refer primarily to the media industries, or what Hesmondhalgh calls the 'core cultural industries' (2002:12).<sup>7</sup> My own preference for 'cultural industries' means that I often use it as a synonym for creative industries in the publications submitted here. For me, the term is more accurate, in that it is the cultural or symbolic nature of these goods and services that is distinctive.

Debates about the 'culturisation' of the economy have been ongoing since the early 1990s (Amin 1994; Lash and Urry 1994) and have led some to argue that terms like cultural or creative industries are no longer useful, as certain characteristics – the importance of innovation, knowledge, branding and so on – are widespread across the whole economy. Here, the terms 'creative economy' or 'cultural economy' are often posited as being more helpful (Andari et al. 2007). However, as Miller (2009) has recently argued, while slogans such as 'everything is political' may be accurate, they are not particularly useful as guides to analysis or action. Policy for the creative industries requires something to act upon, and while the designated creative industry

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<sup>5</sup> The list includes advertising, architecture, the arts and antique market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio. Close 'economic inter-relationship' with tourism, hospitality, museums and galleries, and the heritage sector was also noted (DCMS 1998:3).

<sup>6</sup> An example of this would be the 'Living Places' programme run by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), together with five cultural agencies, the Arts Council, Sport England and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), as well as heritage in the form of English Heritage and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. The idea was to grow cultural and sports provision in line with housing growth, where cultural provision expressly includes the creative industries alongside arts, sport, heritage, museums, libraries and archives, and the built environment. See <http://www.living-places.org.uk/about-living-places>, retrieved 17 November 2009.

<sup>7</sup> The significance of the shift from cultural to creative industries has been widely debated in academic circles. See, for example, Gamham 2005; Pratt 2005; O'Connor 2007; it is also discussed in Oakley 2006 and 2009c.

sub-sectors are far from ideal, it seems necessary to set some boundaries around these activities, both for policymaking and analysis.

Over time, the preferred designation, at least for policymakers, appears to have become 'cultural and creative industries', a term enshrined in agencies such as the creative and cultural industry skills agency (CCSkills) or Creativity, Culture and Education, the post-2009 name for the education programme previously known as Creative Partnerships.<sup>8</sup> The publications presented here deal with the 'cultural and creative' industries, that is, the creative industries together with museums and the heritage sector.

## 1.2. Inclusions and Exclusions

This thesis examines creative industries policy as an example of New Labour public policy. Given this, the focus is primarily on the UK, though some of the publications make reference to work conducted outside the UK (particularly Oakley 2009a, 2009b). As Mulholland (2008) notes, the official terminology is slippery here. Creative 'Britain' (DCMS 2008), in fact, contains policy prescriptions that apply primarily to England.<sup>9</sup> In the period under consideration, devolution in the UK has resulted in different policy approaches in England, Wales and Scotland (Paterson 2003; Turok 2003; Allard 2007), though these developments are not considered directly in this commentary;<sup>10</sup> indeed, most of the consultancy work referred to below and in the publications took place in England.

A charge of parochialism or 'metropolitanist bias' (Cunningham 2007:348), is often made against those writing about creative industries purely in the UK context, and I accept the argument that the practices governing their development at an international level are diverse and cannot be read from the UK situation alone (Wang 2004). My defence is that I make no claims that it can be.

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<sup>8</sup> Unlike 'cultural' to 'creative' industries, the move to 'cultural and creative industries' has not been widely commented on. My view is that it is largely pragmatic and designed to reassure those who feel that arts or heritage sectors are excluded from 'creative industries' – a necessary consideration when public agencies involved in the arts or heritage are often actors in strategies for local creative industries.

<sup>9</sup> Discussion with T. Campbell on terms of reference for *Creative Britain*, personal email communication, 28 January 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Schlesinger (2009c) argues that even where administrative regimes are different, intellectual dependency is such that Scotland has simply absorbed the notion of the creative industries from London: 'Lacking originality, Scottish Labour imported New Labour policy and terminology without altering a comma or full stop' (19).

This thesis is not an examination of the effectiveness of policies on the competitiveness of creative industry sub-sectors (e.g., film, music, TV or videogames) or, even more fraught, on the 'quality' of products or services. I am not considering related policy areas such as intellectual property (IP) or the development of digital infrastructure (Hesmondhalgh 2009).

Much creative industries policy is a development of earlier notions, particularly those around the restructuring of urban space (Scott 2000; Sassen 2001; Smith 2003; van Heur 2008) and the related area of cultural regeneration (Evans and Shaw 2004). This provides a background to several of the pieces submitted here (Oakley 2004a, 2006, 2009a), but for reasons of space, it is not a focus of this commentary.

Other related areas such as arts education (Bamford 2006; Oakley 2008), arts funding (Oakley 2006, 2009a, 2009c) or evidence-based policymaking (Oakley 2004b) are considered in some of the publications, but this thesis is not an examination of these areas specifically.

Having cleared some of the ground, the next section presents my hypothesis.

## 2. Statement of hypothesis

The argument of this thesis is that New Labour's account of the knowledge economy determined its approach to creative industries policy. This account was essentially a *sociological* one, which took its cue from what were perceived to be long-term social and economic changes, as opposed to a *political* account, which would seek to shape and direct those changes (Finlayson 2003). This distinguishes creative industries from previous cultural industry policies, which took a more explicitly political view of the need to re-shape markets through public intervention.

This argument reflects other critiques of New Labour politics, which claim that it can be seen as a development of prevailing neoliberal ideas<sup>11</sup> (Hay 1999; Thompson 2002; Finlayson 2003; Clarke 2004, 2005). The element of neoliberalism at issue here is the way it seeks to elide the 'market' with capitalism, and to present these as the natural, inexorable state of society (Mirowski 2009). This determines the apolitical approach to policymaking described above. But the particular development of neoliberalism represented by New Labour can be seen in Bevir's argument (2005) about the importance of institutionalist ideas for New Labour. He sees these as a distinct form of neoliberalism, in the emphasis on networks characterised by social and ethical norms, as opposed to a focus purely on marketisation.

This approach is evident in creative industries policy, both in stressing networks and in the underlying assumption that the social norms on which these networks depend would be sufficient to create a benign form of economic development. This would deliver growth and jobs, as well as respond to the need for social inclusion, particularly through employment (DCMS 1999b, 2000a, 2000d, 2007).

I argue that this rhetoric continued throughout the period under examination, despite mounting evidence that such forms of economic development resulted in labour markets that were highly unequal in terms of race and class (see Oakley 2006, 2009a, 2009b). In particular, the growing incidence of unpaid work as an entry criteria for the

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<sup>11</sup> The term neoliberalism is a complex and contested one. Indeed, an argument of this thesis is that there are varieties of neoliberalism, including the version represented by New Labour. The previous Conservative government had emphasised the importance of markets, the de-regulation of finance, the privatisation of public services and state-owned firms, and an attack on trade unions. New Labour policy was in some cases the same and in others different but, as argued above, the important point of continuity was the notion of the market as a natural way of organising society, to which politics can only respond. In defining neoliberalism, I am indebted to Mirowski 2009.

creative industries excluded those who lacked parental or other sources of income that could make unpaid work viable (Randall and Culkin 2007; DCMS 2008; Cabinet Office 2009).

The originality of this thesis lies in using creative industries to analyse New Labour's politics, and doing so from the position of someone who was involved in many aspects of creative industries policy throughout the period in question.

The creative industries are a productive way to view New Labour politics because they embody several elements of its understanding of the knowledge economy, including work, place and culture. In terms of work, the creative industries are densely networked, and employ highly skilled workers in what is often portrayed as desirable, even liberatory, forms of work. This is discussed further in Sections 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 (and in Oakley et al. 2008; Oakley 2009b, 2009d).

The attachment of creative industries to specific places, both because of the importance of face-to-face interaction in spreading ideas,<sup>12</sup> and the identification of some artists and firms with particular milieu (Scott 2000; Pratt 2000, 2002, 2009), was taken to mean that certain locations would retain their importance in a globalised economy. Importantly, it was argued that that these activities were less likely to be lost to low-wage competition overseas (Department of Trade and Industry 1998).<sup>13</sup>

Ideas about the vibrancy of commercial popular culture were linked, not always explicitly, to the notion that the expansion of these sectors would offer enhanced opportunities to certain groups: ethnic minorities in particular (Smith 1998; DCMS 1999b; LDA 2003; BOP Consulting 2008c). These possibilities had also animated cultural industries advocates in previous decades (Bianchini 1987; Lewis 1990; O'Connor 2007). But in that case, they had been supported by a political understanding that achieving this would require state intervention in the *structure* of markets, both in terms of firm ownership and in access to distribution networks.

Creative industry advocates were keen to expand the market, particularly by supporting new businesses, but less keen to re-shape it. What creative industry approaches lacked was an account of any potential for conflict or tension between

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<sup>12</sup> By which I mean specific 'scenes' that grow up with places such as the Manchester or Detroit music scene, or the art scene of East London.

<sup>13</sup> This is discussed further in Oakley 2006 and 2009a.

social and economic imperatives, or indeed between market participation and democratic participation. Economic development was viewed as being able to deliver social goods, including greater social cohesion, so an account of potential conflicts was regarded as unnecessary.<sup>14</sup>

The collaborative structures, and indeed traditional social and ethical orientations of the creative industries (Banks 2007), meant that they could easily be integrated into a notion of benign or progressive economic development (Oakley et al. 2008; Oakley 2009d). This is particularly the case when one considers the kind of work produced by the creative industries and the attitudes of New Labour policymakers towards that work.

As discussed in Sections 5 and 6, below (and in Oakley 2009b), the idea that work had changed in ways that resolved the centuries-old conflict of capital and labour was central to New Labour's vision of the knowledge economy (Cruddas 2006). Creative industry work was emblematic of this. The expansion of these sectors was seen to offer 'good work', which provided personal fulfilment and decent remuneration, and to offer it to those who had previously been excluded (Smith 1998; LDA 2003; Deptford/ Greenwich nd).

The publication of *Creative Britain* in 2008 (DCMS 2008) asserted the government's concerns about the unrepresentative nature of the cultural and creative workforce,<sup>15</sup> where women and ethnic minorities continued to be under-represented, and suggested policies to try and remedy them. But in keeping with creative industry approaches, it underestimated the structural factors that produced an unrepresentative labour market in these sectors. Policy interventions were to be limited to the provision of some paid apprenticeships, and the provision of better information for making career choices. The issue of conditions of labour within the cultural sectors, and the psychological or economic sustainability of this type of work, was not addressed (Ross 2003; Gill and Pratt 2008; Banks and Hesmondhalgh 2009). Similarly ignored was the broader context of growing inequality and declining social mobility in which the decade of creative industries had taken place (Cabinet Office 2009; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). It thus stands as an example of New Labour

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<sup>14</sup> This is discussed further in Section 6, below, and in Oakley 2006, 2009c and 2009d.

<sup>15</sup> According to the Sector Skills body, CCSkills, in 2008 around 60 per cent of creative industry workers were male, and some 93 per cent were white – a particularly alarming fact when one considers the concentration of these sectors in London, where almost a quarter of the workforce is from an ethnic minority background. See Oakley 2009b for a further discussion of the labour market.

attitudes to work as a way out of social exclusion (Holden 1999; Driver and Martell 2002; Barry 2005), and of the limitations of this approach.

### **3. My background**

Of the publications submitted for this thesis, one (Oakley et al. 2008) is a commissioned piece of research (won via competitive tender and co-authored). The others are commissioned conference papers, reports, book chapters and scholarly articles.

This combination reflects my background as a consultant, both in economic development and in cultural policy; a policy commentator, particularly associated with the Demos thinktank (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999, 2001); and latterly as a teacher and researcher within higher education.

Prior to 1997, I had for a number of years been working in an area that was sometimes described as 'information society' policy (Oakley 2003) and later as the 'knowledge economy'. This included periods of time researching management consultancy as a knowledge-based industry, while a Research Fellow at Manchester Business School (Oakley 1995; Berry and Oakley 1993), and looking at policies on digital information from the European Commission, while employed as a Senior Researcher at the Policy Studies Institute. This embraced such issues as intellectual property, the commercialisation of public sector information (Janssen and Dumortier 2003) and the growth of information work and workers (Huws et al. 2001; Garnham 2005).

In 1997, I became a self-employed consultant/researcher working for a variety of public agencies, thinktanks and research organisations. It was at one of these thinktanks, Demos, that I co-wrote *The Independents* (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999), which established my reputation as a commentator on what become known as the 'creative industries'. My purpose in discussing *The Independents* here is the role that it played in my career development and hence in the production of the later work submitted for this thesis.

#### **3.1 The Independents**

Work on *The Independents*, co-written with Charles Leadbeater, began shortly before the publication of the first DCMS *Mapping Document* (DCMS 1998) – often thought of

as launching the notion of creative industries in the UK,<sup>16</sup> although it should be noted that *The Independents* uses the terms cultural entrepreneurs and cultural industries (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999:13), the term 'creative industries' not yet having become widespread.

*The Independents* covers many of the issues and ideas that would later be taken up in creative industries policy, including our perception of the failure of contemporary public policy (either through public support for the arts, or small business investment) to reach the types of small, cultural businesses that we were describing.

This observation, which became known as the 'missing middle' (Henry 2007), was already the subject of academic and policy work, particularly at Manchester Institute for Popular Culture (Redhead 1990; O'Connor 1998; Banks et al. 2000; Raffo et al. 2000), in McRobbie's work on the fashion industry (McRobbie 1998) and Bilton's on the 'new adhocracy' (Bilton 1999). Indeed, it could be argued that creative industries policy, as it developed over the following decade, consisted *primarily* of the establishment of networks and specialist support agencies designed to address this issue.<sup>17</sup>

The publication of *The Independents* by Demos, strongly associated with the New Labour government, and its account of the role and potential of small cultural businesses, led to it becoming something of a core text for those uncomfortable with, or opposed to, the idea of creative industries (McRobbie 2002). They argued that its account of entrepreneurial models of work stressed a more individualistic, indeed neoliberal, understanding of cultural production than had been the case in previous versions of cultural industries policy, such as that of the Greater London Council (Hesmondhalgh 2008).

The counterbalance to this individualism was presented in *The Independents* as attachment to place. We argued that local cultural businesses thrived on 'easy access to local, tacit know-how, a style, a look, a sound' (Leadbeater and Oakley

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<sup>16</sup> Although some data from the *Mapping Documents* is included in *The Independents*, I was not aware that 'mapping' was underway when the research began, and our understanding of what constituted a 'cultural entrepreneur', or which firms to interview, had no relation to the activities of the Creative Industries Taskforce. The impetus for the publication was linked to narratives of urban regeneration, rather than the creative industries *per se*, hence the inclusion of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, and Sheffield Local Education Authority as funders of the research.

<sup>17</sup> Examples of such agencies include: the Cultural Industries Development Service (CIDS) in Manchester; Creative London; Creative Kernow; Creative Exchange: South Yorkshire; Creative Sheffield; Creative Lewisham; Creative Dorset and many more.

1999:14), which would allow these places to negotiate a new accommodation with the global market.

The degree to which places could do this turned out to be much weaker than we suggested.<sup>18</sup> Although *The Independents* raised questions about the sustainability of these businesses (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999:15), and the polarised nature of the labour market (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999:17), which is taken up in later publications (Oakley 2009a, 2009b, 2009c), it undoubtedly presents an overly positive view of the potential of small businesses, both to sustain themselves and grow, and to have positive effects in terms of the regeneration of UK towns and cities.

But it is perhaps in its attitudes to work that *The Independents* now seems most flawed, neglecting what Gill and Pratt (2008) argue is the competitiveness, exhaustion and fear of failure that accompanies self-employment. The focus was on the self-employed as entrepreneurs (see Oakley 2009b) and many of those interviewed for *The Independents* did indeed relish many of the aspects of self-employment – an issue picked up by many other writers on cultural labour (McRobbie 2004<sup>19</sup>; Banks 2007). A more critical discussion of cultural labour is one to which several of the publications presented here return.

### **3.2 Creative industry consultancy**

The development of creative industries policy, as Fleming (2004) has argued, engendered a new set of intermediaries and consultants, who became involved in advising public agencies, particularly local authorities, and the newly created RDAs on creative industries (O'Connor and Gu, forthcoming).

It is as one of these consultants, having worked on a large number of localised creative industry strategies (Sheffield 2002; LDA 2003; NWDA 2004), mapping projects (West Sussex 2007), skills strategies (NMP 2004), evaluations of social and economic impacts (SHIPS 2008) and feasibility studies (Hartlepool 2003), that I developed some of the publications presented here.

The 'geography' of creative industries consultancy, which in the UK has mostly been constituted at the sub-national level, exemplifies in some ways Jessop and others' arguments about the re-structuring of the post-war state towards a more multi-scalar

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<sup>18</sup> As argued in Oakley 2009b and elsewhere; for example, Gibson and Klocker 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Accessed October 2008.

governance regime (Jessop 2002, 2005; Peck 2002, 2004). This is particularly important in the debates about 'creative cities' (see Oakley 2009a), which many have argued are the prime site of creative industry development (Scott 2000; Florida 2002). It also helps to explain the relative unimportance that 'national' policy attributed to the creative industries, and hence the relatively few DCMS publications that will feature in any account. But the story of the UK in this period is also one of New Labour's failures to secure democratic legitimacy for its plans for sub-national government, and its creation of a plethora of public agencies, often with over-lapping territories. Plans for elected regional assemblies in England were abandoned after the government lost a referendum in the North East of England in 2004; the sub-national agencies responsible for much creative industry work, such as RDAs, have been vulnerable to the charge of being unelected quangos ever since.

The fragmented geography of public funding meant that commissioners of creative industries consultancy could range from the very localised – a strategy for a particular 'neighbourhood' (Manchester's Oxford Road, for example; BOP Consulting 2008b) - to those taking a regional and, only occasionally, national approach. The relationship between this shifting geography and the 'epistemic community' (Haas 1992) of policymakers and consultants is of course co-constitutive. Prince (2009) has observed that as the policy concept of creative industries began to circulate, more individuals become creative industries experts, and more clients, needing creative industry advice, were, for a while at least, created.

This community and its international networks (Prince 2009) has its own infrastructure of conferences,<sup>20</sup> journals and meetings, but it also overlapped with academic and policy networks, particularly for a time at least, in forums like FOCI.<sup>21</sup>

The typical consultancy engagement, if there is such a thing, is generally a brief affair, usually between two and four months in duration. In this it reflects the often short-term nature of funding and adds to the difficulty in developing longitudinal research (discussed in Oakley 2004a and Section 8, below). The literature produced by such engagements is discussed in Section 4, below.

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<sup>20</sup> For example, Creative Clusters, a conference series that began in 2002 and ran more or less annually until 2007. Its focus was on place-based creative industry economic developments and as such generally drew a large crowd of local authority staff, along with consultants and some academics (see [creatveclusters.com](http://creatveclusters.com)).

<sup>21</sup> FOCI – Forum on Creative Industries – was a membership organisation based primarily at Manchester Metropolitan University, which brought together academics, consultants, policymakers and some industry representatives to discuss the issues of creative industries and regional development.

### 3.3 The nature of policy and academic writing

The publications presented here arise out of my work both as a consultant and as an academic. As is characteristic of this type of work, they combine a variety of methods: statistical analysis, surveys, interviews (telephone, face-to-face and focus groups), reviews of policy and, in some cases, both academic and grey literature.

In this they are produced using the same mix that characterises a consultancy engagement, but with a much heavier emphasis on the academic literature, especially in later publications (Oakley 2009a, 2009b, 2009c).

It is not that academic literature never features in consultancy work: cultural agencies (for example, Arts Council England or the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) and RDAs (see Oakley 2004b, for example) commission narrative literature reviews that include academic work. Some of this focuses on research into the 'social impacts' of particular cultural investments (e.g., Dodd et al. 2002; Geddes 2004; BOP Consulting 2005a), but it is less common, in my experience, for local authorities pursuing 'creative industry' strategies to draw on academic literature as a starting point.<sup>22</sup>

Mapping the creative industries (estimates of the number and type of creative businesses in a specific locale) was a task often carried out for consultancy clients such as local authorities.<sup>23</sup> This resulted both in a stronger emphasis on statistical work in consultancy, as opposed to academic work, but also in concerns about the rigour of such work being expressed in some academic publications (Volkerling 2001; Garnham 2005; Chapain and Comunian 2009).

Attempts to standardise the measurement of creative industries, such as the Data Evidence Toolkit (DCMS 2004), as well as the DCMS's own Economic Estimates,<sup>24</sup> were intended in part to address these concerns. My point here is not to enter the debate about the reliability or otherwise of creative industry statistics, but simply to say that consultancy work often starts from a statistical viewpoint. This could be characterised as an argument that the creative industries are growing fast, and therefore we need

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<sup>22</sup> This may simply be to do with relative levels of specialist expertise (by which I mean specialist research staff) within local authorities, as opposed to national cultural agencies.

<sup>23</sup> See Prince 2009, for a fuller discussion of the importance of mapping in producing creative industries discourse and for a discussion of the Data Evidence Toolkit.

<sup>24</sup> There were eight annual DCMS *Economic Estimates*, the latest of which is from February 2010.

to support them – a claim which is often made, to make the case for public investment. This starting point accounts for some of the accusations of boosterism that have been levelled at creative industry consultancy, including my own (Knell and Oakley 2007). And it may account for the almost apologetic tone displayed in later statistical work, which often revises the numbers downwards (Greater London Authority 2010).

Concerning the selection of methods, therefore, the difference between academic and consultancy research has never seemed to me to be that great. The questions asked are often different, emphasis is different, tone of voice is different, as, of course, are sources of legitimacy – peer reviews versus client satisfaction – but these differences are not primarily methodological.

Bell (2007:54) has written compellingly of the experience of work 'at the interface between academic and applied research', and what he describes as the 'mundanizing' process that occurs when academic theories are translated into material suitable for a policy audience. Although recognising this description, my own experience was somewhat different, and some of the publications presented here (Oakley 2004a, 2006) represent an attempt to reflect on the involvement in policy, in an academic context, rather than the other way around. One might also call this a 'de-mundanizing' process (if one were not concerned about violence to the English language), that is, the ability to reflect on these processes in a medium that can allow for greater complexity. It is a process that has in many ways been replicated in the writing of this commentary.

This touches on long-running debates within cultural studies and in geography,<sup>25</sup> about the role of the academic in the formation and critique of public policy. The degree to which academics should engage directly in public policy formation, as Tony Bennett has argued that they should (Bennett 1992), is disputed by others. McGuigan (2003) articulates the need to maintain critical distance from policymakers, a tension that Bell (2007) suggests plagued his own attempts to provide policy advice from the standpoint of an academic.

A version of this debate has recently surfaced in creative industries, with Schlesinger (2009b) arguing that much of the academic community researching or teaching in

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Bennett, 1992; Martin, 2001; Massey, 2001; McGuigan, 2003; Bell, 2007. See also Cunningham, 2003, *The evolving creative industries: From original assumptions to contemporary interpretations*, unpublished paper, <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/archive/00004391>, retrieved 22 August 2007.

the area has been part of what he terms the 'Hallelujah Chorus' of approval for these notions, rather than critical commentators.

My own academic work has been informed by the experience of working with public policymakers, not least in understanding the very real constraints under which they operate, and the attempts often made to circumvent them. This allows one to avoid naive assumptions about policy development. As Olma has noted (2007), the practice of critiquing policy reports alone, often by recasting particular phrases – 'creative industries' and the like – in scare quotes, does not get us very far in understanding the complexity of creative industries. In my experience, and perhaps, ironically, the consultant is often better placed to engage in critical debates with policymakers, in part because this is less expected of them, and in part because they are seen to have a 'closer' understanding of the subject.

Having looked at my own background in the field, the next section of the commentary briefly considers the range of literatures concerned with the creative industries.

## 4 Producing the creative industries: the relevant literatures

Having discussed my own experiential background in this area, I now turn to the literatures on which a study of this topic must draw. These include a range of policy documents produced by DCMS and other central and local government bodies; a series of consultancy reports and strategies; and academic literature. My purpose in this section is to discuss the type of literature that informs creative industries policy rather than provide an exhaustive review of it.<sup>26</sup> What I regard as the key texts in terms of providing theoretical background to the creative industries are discussed in Sections 5 and 6 below, in connection with my overall thesis.

### 4.1 Policy Statements

One way of studying policy may be to follow an idea from conception, citing specific political ideas or manifesto commitments, often via primary legislation. This is not possible in this case. No primary legislation was required to bring the creative industries into being, and between initiation of the Creative Industries Taskforce in 1997<sup>27</sup> and *Creative Britain* in 2008 (DCMS) few national policy documents were produced.

At a national level, those that were produced came largely from the Creative Industries Task Force (CITF) set up in 1997.<sup>28</sup> Its remit was to recommend steps to maximise the economic impact of the UK creative industries at home and abroad (DCMS 1998). Following production of the *Mapping Documents* (DCMS 1998, 2001a), CITF began a programme of work on what appeared to be the primary issues of

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<sup>26</sup> See Prince 2009, for a useful discussion of creative industries policy literature; and Oakley 2009b, for a longer discussion of relevant academic literature.

<sup>27</sup> The Creative Industries Task Force was established under the Chairmanship of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport Chris Smith. Members included fashion designer Paul Smith, Eric Salama (WPP), Gail Rebeck (Random Houser), David Puttnam, Janice Hughes (Spectrum), Robert Deveruex/Richard Branson (Virgin), Waheed Ali, Alan McGee. In 1999 Charles Allen (Granada) and Stephen Hepell (Ultralab) were appointed. It also featured representatives of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions; the FCO; DTI; HM Treasury; the Department for Education and Employment; the Minister for Women; The Scottish, Welsh and NI Office; the British Council; the Office of Science and Technology; No. 10 Policy Unit; and DCMS officials. It was wound up in 2000, having 'completed its main programme of work' (DCMS 2002:4).

<sup>28</sup> The Creative Industries Taskforce, of course, built on earlier statistical work in both the arts and the cultural industries, notably Goreham & Partners (1996) and Casey et al. (1996). Conceptually, it was also influenced by the Keating Government's 'Creative Nation', produced in Australia 1994 (Government of Australia 1994).

creative industries support: skills (DCMS 2000d), finance (DCMS 2000c), export promotion (DCMS 1999a, 1999c) and intellectual property (DCMS 2000b). A sub-group led by MP Richard Caborn considered the issue of the creative industries at a regional level (DCMS 2000a).

These documents both continued to develop the notion of creative industries as a governable object<sup>29</sup> (Mitchell 2002) and produced specific policies for aspects of them. However, such policies tend to be constructed not by DCMS, but by specific national forums such as the Creative Industries Export Promotion Advisory Group, or at the regional and local level.

As discussed in Oakley (2006, 2009a), it was at this regional and local level that the fusion of economic development, regeneration and social inclusion goals was largely enacted (see, for example, London Development Agency 2003). National issues such as intellectual property or exports were less prominent at regional level, whereas job creation, social inclusion, talent retention and area-based improvements were more so. While primary policy documents reflect some of this sub-national policymaking (e.g., NWDA 2008<sup>30</sup>), much relevant material is contained within the grey literature.

## 4.2 Grey literature

The majority of grey literature is commissioned by public sector agencies, and in the case of creative industries, often produced by 'actors formally external to the state' (Prince 2009:93), such as consultants. Although a reading of the grey literature in this area is unlikely to provide much in the way of theoretical background, it does give a clue to the policy techniques that are used, and the policy actors involved.

Mapping the sector in terms of revenues, exports, employment and contribution to GDP was one of the first activities undertaken under the newly initiated creative industries banner, and it has continued to be a popular technique at regional and local levels (e.g., BOP Consulting 2005b, 2007, 2008a; Fleming 2005b, 2005c, 2005d). Other common local policy approaches include the construction of specialist business units or 'creative quarters' (e.g., Fleming 2005a; NMP 2003); advice on types

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<sup>29</sup> For example, by the development of a Public Service Agreement Target (PSA 4), the aim of which was to improve the productivity of the creative, tourism and leisure industries. See DCMS 2009, which, among other things, discusses the difficulties of estimating such a figure for the creative industries.

<sup>30</sup> See also Creative Sheffield, Business Plan, 2006–7, <http://www.creativesheffield.co.uk>, retrieved 31 August 2007; Martin Jackson, 2006, In search of Chunky Dunsters ... a cultural strategy for the South West, Culture South West: COI.

of business support;<sup>31</sup> advice on funding, particularly public investment; educational initiatives (BOP Consulting/SQW 2005); and skills development and training.

For the most part, this literature concerns itself with the pragmatics of particular interventions. It rarely seeks to analyse or critique the notion of creative industries, but, as suggested in section 3.3 above, there are sufficient exceptions to suggest that consultants have not just been compliant actors in the development of creative industries. Prince (2009) argues that the epistemic community of consultants, policy advisors and academics that grew up around creative industries in the UK have served to subtly re-shape the understanding of it. He cites the development of the *DCMS Evidence Toolkit* (DCMS 2004) by academic Andy Pratt, together with BOP Consulting and Experian business strategies, as a way in which subsidised cultural activities, including the heritage sector, were re-inserted into regional creative industries policy. And as I argued in Oakley (2009a), while the work of Richard Florida was highly influential for a time among UK local authorities, influential critiques developed early, not just from thinktanks (Nathan 2005) but also from consultancies (BOP Consulting 2005a; SHIPS 2008).

Indeed, the notion of 'evidence-based policymaking' (Oakley 2008), and the fact that many consultancy strategies did contain research on the shape and size of the creative industry sectors, meant that, as van Heur (2008) comments, the discourse of the creative industries could sometimes be turned against itself. In particular, statistical data such as the *DCMS Economic Estimates* or the GLA's work on London (e.g., Greater London Authority 2007) began to undermine claims for growth in the creative industries in the period after 2005.

### **4.3 The role of thinktanks**

The role of thinktanks in the public debate on creative industries policy has recently been analysed by Schlesinger (2009b). His paper concentrates on the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and Demos, both of which he regards as key New Labour thinktanks. He is concerned with the inter-penetration by a small group of people of the worlds of government, thinktanks and the media, and hence by the influence they wield.

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<sup>31</sup> Such as 'Own It', an intellectual property advice service for small businesses, based at the University of the Arts London – see Fleming 2008.

While the IPPR in particular was hugely influential on New Labour's broadcasting and communications policy, particularly via individuals such as James Purnell<sup>32</sup> and Ed Richards.<sup>33</sup> *The Independents* aside, neither Demos nor the IPPR had much of a role in the formation of the notion of creative industries. More influential at that stage was the lower-profile Smith Institute, which co-funded *The Independents* and organised a series of Downing Street seminars on the themes of entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy in 1998.<sup>34</sup>

John Holden's work on 'cultural value' (Holden 2004, 2006) has influenced the debate about instrumentalism in cultural policy, a theme enthusiastically adopted by right-wing thinktanks such as Policy Exchange (Mirza 2006). But it would be fair to say that in creative industries specifically – the Smith Institute's early intervention aside – thinktanks had little involvement until the Creative Economy Programme was launched in 2005 by the then Secretary of State, James Purnell.

The Creative Economy Programme, which resulted in *Creative Britain* (DCMS 2008), was a somewhat tortuous affair. Seven working groups considered a range of evidence on issues ranging from intellectual property to diversity.<sup>35</sup> The purpose was to re-examine the notion of creative industries, and to produce a formulation that was both more intellectually robust<sup>36</sup> and more integrated with economic activities outside the creative industries themselves, hence, 'creative economy'.<sup>37</sup>

Various changes of ministerial personnel, and turf wars between departments, meant that the Creative Economy Review became bogged down and protracted. To

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<sup>32</sup> Purnell, then Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, had played a role in the IPPR's work on media convergence, which led to the formation of Ofcom. At the time of writing, he is working with Demos on its Open Left Project, 'a return to the big questions of the Left'; see <http://www.demos.co.uk/projects/open-left>, retrieved 07 December 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Ed Richards, Chief Executive of Ofcom, had formerly advised Tony Blair on media and communication issues.

<sup>34</sup> The Smith Institute, set up in memory of former Labour leader John Smith, was always seen as a representative of the 'Brownite' wing of New Labour. Former BFI Director Wilf Stevenson was Director for many years until forced to resign following criticism from the Charity Commission that its closeness to Gordon Brown breached the rules governing charitable organisations. Graham Hitchen, former Policy Director at the Arts Council, and a key figure in Creative Industries in the UK, is a Fellow of the Institute, as was Ed Balls.

<sup>35</sup> The full range of working groups was: Infrastructure, Competition and IP, Access to Finance and Business support, Education and Skills, Diversity, Technology and Evidence, and Analysis.

<sup>36</sup> That is, more robust in the sense of providing a better 'model' of the creative industries than simply a list of 13 sub-sectors. Attempts to remodel the understanding of the creative industries had already included the DCMS Data Evidence Toolkit (DCMS 2004), which defined the creative industries within the context of a wider cultural sector, Frontier Economics (2006) and the NESTA report (2006), all of which looked at different ways of categorising the cultural and creative sector.

<sup>37</sup> A senior DCMS Civil Servant told me that the hope was also to cull some of the 'creative anywhere' networks and support agencies that had sprung up throughout the country.

refresh the thinking and try to build a 'narrative' that various government departments could agree on, the Work Foundation, a thinktank which had hitherto had very little to say on creative industries,<sup>38</sup> was drafted in.<sup>39</sup> The Work Foundation was headed by Will Hutton, a sometime critic of New Labour (see Section 5, below) and a 'heavyweight' in policy terms. But, as Schlesinger acknowledges (2009b), the Work Foundation document, *Staying Ahead* (Andari et al. 2007), was not, as had been widely predicted, a precursor to a government Green Paper.

The limits of thinktank influence on the policy formation process can be seen here. Disagreements between the DCMS and DTI/ BERR about who 'owned' software, videogames and 'the high tech' parts of the creative industries, as well as continuing suspicion at the Treasury about whether creative industries was really a part of the economy that warranted special attention, had always dogged the creative industries debate (Schlesinger 2009b). An external contractor such as the Work Foundation was no more likely to weave these disagreements into a coherent policy line than anyone else could. Having said that, this was not a case of civil servants or government departments 'taking back' the issue from thinktanks and advisors. The DCMS report, *Creative Britain* (2008), was drafted in large part by John Newbigin, former adviser to Chris Smith and influential in the first DCMS incarnation of the creative industries, via the Creative Industries Task Force.

#### **4.4 The treatment of this subject in the academic literature**

Most of the publications submitted here contain reviews of relevant academic literature: on economic geography (Oakley 2009a), cultural labour markets (Oakley 2009b) and the discourse of creativity and innovation (Oakley 2009c). The purpose of this section is to consider the existing literature on a narrower topic: the growth of an academic critique of creative industries.

While the term 'creative industries' and the shift of policy signified by the *Creative Industries Mapping Documents* (DCMS 1998, 2001a) both feature in the academic literature from around 2001 (see, for example, Volkerling 2001; Cunningham 2002), the volume of literature increases significantly from around 2004, when creative industries start to become the subject of critique (Miller 2004; Oakley 2004a; Pratt 2004; Garnham 2005; Hesmondhalgh 2005).

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<sup>38</sup> Although it had done much work on the 'knowledge economy'; see <http://www.theworkfoundation.com/research/keconomy.aspx>.

<sup>39</sup> As discussed in 3.2, above, the creative industries expertise gained by Work Foundation staff on *Staying Ahead* enabled it to bid for subsequent creative industry research contracts and become another actor in this space.

A special issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 'The New Economy, Creativity and Consumption' (Hartley 2004), contained several pieces which dealt with the notion of creative industries (Miller 2004; Oakley 2004a; Pratt 2004). Wang's paper, 'How Far can the Discourse of Creative Industries Travel?', in the same issue, queries the transplanting of creative industries to differing political and economic contexts, though the question in the title was soon answered by a host of work relating the degree to which creative industries had been internationalised.<sup>40</sup>

Hartley's edited collection, *Creative Industries* (2005), features a number of chapters on related discourses such as the creative city, the 'new economy', and creativity within the firm, but has less to say about the policy notion of creative industries per se. The introduction identifies creativity as a 'driver of social and economic change' (Hartley 2005:1), a change which, in a foretaste of things to come, re-imagines the arts and creative industries in the context of the knowledge economy, new media and 'newly interactive citizen-consumers' (2005:5). This belief in what was seen as the liberatory potential of creativity, combined with digital technology, continues in work produced by scholars in the Creative Industries Faculty at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), a theme which was to see them become the foremost example of the creativity-as-innovation school of thought (Oakley 2009c; O'Connor 2009).

In doing so, QUT scholars are seen to have abandoned the cultural industries tradition of critique in favour of a neoliberal political reading of economic change (Miller 2009). Cunningham argues that this charge exemplifies the gap between the reception of creative industries by policymakers and business, on one hand, which he sees as largely positive, and academics on the other. This, he argues, acts as a 'textbook case of the disabling gap between policy and critique' (2009a:375).

There is little doubt that much academic work on the creative industries takes an explicitly critical approach (e.g., McRobbie 2002; Lovink and Rossiter 2007; Hesmondhalgh 2008; Miller 2009; Schlesinger 2009b). A special issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* (Banks and O'Connor 2009), entitled 'After the Creative Industries', took an almost valedictory tone, helped in no small way by

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<sup>40</sup> See, for example, UNCTAD 2004 (accessed December 3, 2009); Gibson and Klocker 2004, 2005; O'Connor 2004; Hui 2006; O'Connor and Gu 2006; Mayerhoffer and Mokre 2007; Kaino 2007; Prince 2009; van Heur 2008.

recent statistical indicators that the UK's creative industries were far from healthy.<sup>41</sup> Banks and O'Connor argue that just over 10 years after it was born the idea of creative industries is in danger of collapse, as the distinction between it and any other part of the economy comes under threat of policies which 'seek to finesse the possibility of differences between the representational or redemptive functions of cultural production and its commercial imperative' (2009:369).

This, they argue, signals the end of any benign convergence between the creative industries and a progressive re-structuring of the economy. The assumptions underlying this presumed convergence are the subject of this thesis and particularly of the next two sections.

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<sup>41</sup> See Oakley 2009c, but also a speech by Jonathan Kestenbaum of NESTA, suggesting that 'Just a handful of creative businesses were responsible for the expansion of Creative Britain between 2005 and 2008. Without them, we would be telling a story of economic loss not gain'; see [http://www.nesta.org.uk/news\\_events/assets/features/high-impact\\_firms\\_are\\_key\\_to\\_unlocking\\_growth\\_in\\_creative\\_industries](http://www.nesta.org.uk/news_events/assets/features/high-impact_firms_are_key_to_unlocking_growth_in_creative_industries), retrieved 4 December 2009.

## 5. New Labour, the knowledge economy and the re-shaping of work

Having considered the literature, the next two sections seek to place the idea of creative industries within the politics of New Labour.

### 5.1 Is there a New Labour ideology?

Much of the literature on New Labour politics concerns itself with the degree to which it represents a consistent or coherent ideology, and how much its politics represent a break with 'old' Labour, or traditional social democratic politics (Freeden 1999a, 1999b; Hay 1999; Thompson 2002; Finlayson 2003; Leggett 2005).

Stuart Hall's famous description of Labour's 'double shuffle' (Hall 2003) describes it as a 'hybrid regime' composed of neoliberal and social democratic strands, in which Hall feared neoliberalism had become dominant. Clarke (2004, 2005) also draws attention to New Labour's neoliberal and communitarian strands, manifested in what he sees as its confused notion of the 'citizen–consumer'.<sup>42</sup> Benn (2000:309) discusses another perceived aspect of New Labour 'dualism', namely the co-existence of social liberalism with strands of populist illiberalism.

Other writers are more persuaded that there is a coherent New Labour ideology, although they often disagree as to its nature. A popular argument is that it is simply a continuation of Thatcherism (Power and Whitty 1999; Jenkins 2006), or what Fairclough calls 'Thatcherism with a few frills' (2000:viii). Buckler and Dolowitz (2000) refer to it as social liberalism, combining liberal individualism with redistributive social justice. They describe this redistributive element using New Labour's favoured term of 'fairness', a notion that they argue is interpreted as purely procedural and designed to ensure equality of opportunity, not of outcome. Driver and Martell (1997), on the other hand, regard New Labour's politics as a sort of liberal conservatism, which celebrates the market economy and yet prescribes an essentially conservative communitarianism<sup>43</sup> as the cure for excessive individualism.

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<sup>42</sup> A blurring of what Clarke argues are distinct social and political notions, with 'citizen' referring to a more public, political notion and 'consumer' an essentially private, economic one. The hybrid term suggests the neoliberal subsuming of the political into the economic.

<sup>43</sup> This, they argue, drew heavily on the work of Amitai Etzioni (1993).

For Freedon (1999b), the absence of an ideological 'grand narrative' is not a failing specific to New Labour, but characteristic of modern political parties. He argues that it is *not* the moving between liberal and social democratic strands of thought that makes New Labour distinctive, but its particular readings of these traditions, especially concerning the relationship of the individual to community.

The notion of New Labour politics as a response to a perceived set of social changes is developed in Alan Finlayson's work (Finlayson 2003) and is one I have adopted for this thesis. What he describes as the 'fluidity' of the New Labour 'project'<sup>44</sup> is attributed to its concern with the changing nature of society. To understand it, he argues, we have to understand how New Labour 'makes sense of social changes' (2003:6). Among these changes are what he identifies as the collapse of class-based politics, the growth of individualism and, crucially, fundamental changes in the UK economy. These all informed New Labour's conception of the knowledge economy which, I argue, becomes a deterministic account of both social and economic change, and underlies its creative industry policies.

Bevir's account (2005) of New Labour acknowledges the influence of institutionalism, which stressed the social embeddedness of people and institutions, in contrast to the market-led autonomy favoured by the Conservatives. As this thesis demonstrates, these ideas can be seen clearly in creative industries policy; but as Bevir argues, New Labour nevertheless 'tacitly accepts the neoliberal idea of a universal, unavoidable and tyrannical economic rationality' (2005:85).

And this acceptance undermined any attempt to use embedded social networks to deliver a progressive form of economic development.

## **5.2 Responding to circumstance – New Times?**

When it came to power in 1997, the Labour Party had been in opposition for 18 years, and had used that time to radically re-evaluate British society and its responses to the changes therein. What was understood as the collapse of Keynesian social democracy in the sterling crisis of 1976 (Thompson 2002), was followed by the rise of

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<sup>44</sup> The notion of the New Labour 'project' is generally dated from Blair's accession to the leadership in 1994 and refers to a process of 'modernising' the Labour party's ideology, organisation and policies – most significantly perhaps the abandonment of the Clause IV aspiration to public ownership of the means of production.

Thatcherism, a decline in manufacturing (with consequent mass unemployment), growth in the service sector and, hence, a fracturing of Labour's traditional working-class voting bloc (Hobsbawm 1981). With trade unionism in decline, partly through unemployment and partly through anti-union legislation (Deakin 1992), Labour felt that it needed to respond to the growth of what some saw as the 'privileged core' of the labour market: those in highly skilled and well-paid jobs, who were attracted to Thatcherism (Elliott 1993). The danger of not doing so was feared to be political marginalisation (Jessop et al. 1984).

For Stuart Hall, in the late 1980s, the Left seemed 'not just displaced by Thatcherism, but disabled, flattened, becalmed by the very prospect of change; afraid of rooting itself in the new and unable to make the leap of imagination required to engage the future' (1988:28).

This future orientation, which was to become so key to the creation of 'New Labour', meant grappling with, as well as changes to, the labour market, the dissolution of traditional class/ status formations (Beck 1992; Bauman 2000), and the growth of a consumerism differentiated by taste and 'lifestyle' rather than social class (Murray 1988; Hall 1988).

For Hall and others gathered under the banner of the magazine *Marxism Today* (MT), such changes could offer an opportunity for the Left, if it were willing to recapture the notion of individual autonomy from the Right (Hay 1999; Thompson 2002). As Finlayson has argued (2003), in the latter half of the 1980s, MT exercised an influence out of all proportion to its circulation: even more so in retrospect, given that many of those who wrote for it – including Geoff Mulgan and Charles Leadbeater – would go on to influence New Labour thinking<sup>45</sup> when in government.

MT's central thesis was that the changes outlined above, and in particular the shift from 'Fordist' mass production to 'Post-Fordism'<sup>46</sup> (Amin 1994), were paralleled by a change outside the labour market, away from 'massification' of public services, towards what Leadbeater called 'socialist individualism' (1988:14). This was not a 'rolling back of the state' for traditional Conservative small-state reasons, but an

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<sup>45</sup> Geoff Mulgan, founder of the thinktank Demos, worked at Number 10, Downing Street as head of both the Policy Unit and the Strategy Unit from 1997–2004; Leadbeater was regularly employed as a government advisor, notably on the Department of Trade and Industry, White Paper, *Building the Knowledge Driven Economy* (1998).

<sup>46</sup> This is particularly in relation to a reading of Post-Fordism that associates it with small batch, more specialised production and more individualistic patterns of consumption.

argument that a new form of empowered individualism could allow the state to 'wither away'. This notion of individualism was differentiated from that of the Thatcher government by emphasising the importance of the embedded social norms that govern relationships and, hence, the responsibility that people should take for one another (Bevir 2005).

Hall (1988), as might be expected from a cultural theorist, emphasised the cultural nature of these changes, not just in an anthropological sense, but through the aestheticisation of production, the importance of design and styling, of image and brand – 'the games of using things to signify' who we are, as he put it (Hall 1988:28). Robin Murray, another *Marxism Today* contributor, chided the old Left for its 'puritan' refusal to celebrate the 'variety and creativity in consumption' that the British High Street now offered (Murray 1988:10).

But it was in response to the changing nature of work, and the rise of what came to be termed the 'knowledge economy' (Department of Trade and Industry 1998), that New Labour's ideology became more clearly defined.

Labour MP, Jon Cruddas, writing in the later days of the New Labour regime, remarked on the appeal of the knowledge economy idea,

In a stunning and quite brilliant political move, these ideas legitimised the repositioning of New Labour. At a stroke, the old negatives were dealt with, as they belonged to a previous epoch of industrial work organisation, and to a Labour Party that belonged in that era. As such, New Labour is free from a working class that is literally withering away. Class, inequality and issues of power can be overcome by individual self-actualisation once we overcome the only inequality that matters – access to human capital (2006:208).

The next section explores what it was about the knowledge economy that proved so alluring to New Labour.

### **5.3 New Labour and the knowledge economy**

This section addresses the question of why the idea of a knowledge economy became so central to a whole range of New Labour policies; it was not limited to economic policies but ranged across education, training and social policy (e.g., Department of Social Security 1998; Department for Education and Employment

2000a; Lambert 2003; Leitch 2006), including the development of the creative industries'.

The idea that the requirements of the new 'globalised' economy and the experience of the workplace had fundamentally changed (for many, if not all, workers) was key to New Labour's approach. 'Flexible specialisation', that is, firm strategies based on multi-use equipment, highly skilled workers and strategies of competition through innovation (different goods, not just cheaper goods), appeared to some leftist thinkers as a re-valorisation of work and workers, not a diminishing of them. Thus Murray argued, 'Post-Fordism sees labour as the key asset of modern production' (1988:49). And this labour was to be increasingly highly skilled, as only highly skilled, knowledge-intensive labour would allow a country such as the UK to avoid a low-wage solution to its economic ills. Routine production, both in manufacturing and services, was, it was feared, to be exported to developing economies (Holden 1999).

Others argued that the post-Fordist workplace was inherently less hierarchical (Sabel 1982), a claim we can see echoed in later writers on the 'creative economy', such as Florida (2002; see also Oakley 2009a). These more 'humane' workplaces<sup>47</sup> were said to liberate the expertise of highly skilled workers, allowing both productivity gains and the development of a more contented workforce (Handy 1995).

Another element of flexible specialisation that influenced New Labour policy (particularly in the area of creative industries) was the role of small, interdependent firms, often geographically clustered, as in the so-called 'Third Italy' region of Northern Italy (Thompson 2002; O'Connor 2007).<sup>48</sup> As digital technology became cheaper, firm size was seen as less of an impediment to economic success. In some cases these changes were associated with the democratisation of decision making in the workplace (Handy 1995), and with different forms of ownership, such as producer co-operatives and labour-managed firms (Hirst 1994).

Thompson (2002:106) refers to these ideas as 'post-Fordist socialism' and argues that it offered the Left 'a new and optimistic meta-history' to replace both the perceived failure of state socialist enterprises and the dominance of big business. This tapped

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<sup>47</sup> See Ross 2003, for a critique of this notion.

<sup>48</sup> The term 'Third Italy' was used to distinguish the clusters of small firms in the North East of the country from either the poor South of Italy or the traditionally wealthy North West. Unlike the larger employers of the North West, these smaller firms, often in manufacturing, were seen to withstand the economic crises of the 1970s and early 1980s. This finding was attributed to their dense clustering and high rates of innovation. In particular, the specialised business support offered by 'real service' centres was influential on models of creative industries business support.

into potent traditions of socialist thought, deriving from such writers as William Morris, about the importance of well-rounded, independent artisans with control over their working lives (Morris 2004). In the contemporary context, it was seen as being particularly enabled by the falling costs of digital technology (Garnham 2005), and stimulated by discriminating consumers looking for innovative ways to express themselves through consumption (Murray 1988; Hartley 2005).

As Thompson acknowledges, for a time at least, this notion of post-Fordism was allied to a debate about ownership and participation at work, partly linked to a long-term interest on the Left in co-operatives and worker-managed businesses. Debates about ownership were briefly given a new lease of life by the ideas of 'radical stakeholderism', which became popular in the early 1990s (Kay 1993; Hutton 1996).<sup>49</sup>

Stakeholderism, as described in Will Hutton's best-seller, *The State We're In* (1996), draws strongly on social democratic notions of a reformed capitalism. It presents a critique of Anglo-American capitalism as too short-termist in its approach, dependent on finance rather than manufacturing, and managed in the interests of quick returns to shareholders, rather than the long-term interest of the economy. In terms of firm ownership, the notion of stakeholder was used by writers such as Hutton to imply that groups other than shareholders – employees, suppliers, sub-contractors and consumers – also had a legitimate interest in the behaviours and outcomes of the firm, an interest that needed to be supported by legislation that ensured wider decision making. This model of capitalism was often associated with continental European practices or the so-called Rhine model (Albert 1993).<sup>50</sup>

For some New Labour thinkers, however, European economies were seen as sclerotic and unable to generate the jobs of the future, compared to places like Silicon Valley in California (Leadbeater 1997). California was touted as the model that the UK should follow, both because it 'has captured a leading position in the most knowledge-intensive sectors of the fastest growing industries in the world' (Leadbeater 1997:2), and because the size and structure of its economy, which was relatively decentralised and service sector-intensive, was seen as more similar to Britain than that of Germany.

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<sup>49</sup> This concept, in slightly different form, seems to have become popular again, at least with thinktanks. See Will Davies's *Re-inventing the Firm*, published by Demos in 2009, and Philip Blond's *The Ownership State*, published by NESTA in 2009.

<sup>50</sup> Elsewhere, Albert defines his Rhine model as being based on a 'community of interests' within the firm between workers and owners, and between consumers and producers in the wider economy (Albert 1993:88).

The reputation of the US West Coast as the home of fast-growing media and information technology firms was, at the time, unchallenged. New Labour thinkers were inclined to see this innovative culture as more than simply an economic success; it was also viewed as a source of social and cultural models for society (Leadbeater 1997; Flores and Gray 2000). Bevir (2005) felt that this again reflected the influence of institutionalist ideas within New Labour. The flexibility, responsiveness and innovation that neoliberals ascribe solely to markets could only arise, New Labour theorists argued, within a highly networked economy, where relationships of trust allowed ideas to circulate.

What Grey calls the 'fetish of change' (2003) allied enthusiasm about the employment-creating potential of the Silicon Valley model to a political model that saw the growing use of digital technology as allowing people to increasingly self-govern (Mulgan 1994). In adopting it, New Labour sought to de-politicise its own actions, presenting changes in the economy as *fait accompli* to which it could only react, and which could then be used to justify social and other policies.

#### **5.4 Symbolic analysts and precarious workers**

The notion of a knowledge economy clearly had a lot to offer New Labour, both in its link to a tradition of autonomous labour and in the potential it offered for a Labour Party in opposition to develop an answer to Thatcherism (Thompson 2002).

But problems soon became apparent. Far from producing a series of 'Kelmscotts',<sup>51</sup> even advocates of the 'knowledge economy' (Reich 1993) worried that it had a tendency to produce a dual labour force, with a high-skilled and well-paid core and a more casualised, low-paid periphery. Even the 'Third Italy' was said to pit 'male machinists, technicians and designers' against more casual workers in smaller firms (Thompson 2002:117) – a tendency exacerbated by the relative lack of unionisation in the smaller firms to which work was often sub-contracted (Brusco 1982). The scattering of workers among small firms, even if geographically clustered, made collective bargaining over pay and conditions unlikely (Thompson 2002).

Moreover, this discourse often appeared to have little to say about the larger international context in which such developments were taking place. Globalisation

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<sup>51</sup> Thompson's (2002:107) reference to William Morris's house – here symbolising a site of joyful and creative artisanal labour.

became the byword for those arguing that national economic policymakers were constrained in their ability to shape economic policy (Ohmae 1995). The growth in international capital movements during the 1980s and 1990s, and the resulting increased volatility of the global economic system, was something on which New Labour had little critical to say.

Indeed there was a tendency, uncritically, to accept the view that globalisation meant inevitable and highly constraining restrictions on the room for regulatory manoeuvre for governments<sup>52</sup>. In the case of creative industries, this meant that concerns about issues such as media ownership, access to distribution chains or intellectual property were generally dealt with in a way that was consistent with neoliberal, de-regulatory approaches, rather than intervening on behalf of national or local firms (Doyle 2002; Garnham 2005; Hesmondhalgh 2005).

What response there was from New Labour came in the form of a description of the knowledge economy that drew heavily on US economists such as Robert Reich (Reich 1993). Reich argued that while all other factors of production were mobile, high value labour was less so. This belief was to take a particular form in the case of the cultural and creative industries, where the importance attributed to 'sense of place' combined notions of the role of specific milieu in producing particular cultural outputs (O'Connor 2004, 2007) with these more knowledge-economy-inflected ideas about the competitive advantage of highly skilled labour. The dependence of some cultural entrepreneurs on sense of place for inspiration (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999), and on localised networks for production, was taken to mean that certain places would retain their importance in a globalised cultural economy (Scott 2000).

Attitudes to work then, and the changing nature of work, are central to understanding much of New Labour's attitudes to economic and social policies, including its creative industry policies. An efficient labour market was believed to offer political success in a variety of areas. At the 'top' of the labour market, enhanced human capital<sup>53</sup> was seen as the key to improving Britain's economic competitiveness (Department of Trade and Industry 1998). Throughout the labour market, higher skills would be linked to adaptability, helping to produce self-reliant individuals and communities, who could cope with the sort of changes that the economy was understood to be delivering (Seltzer and Bentley 1999). And at the 'bottom' of society,

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<sup>52</sup> See Hirst and Thompson 1999 and Saul 2005 for critiques of this view.

<sup>53</sup> The expression 'human capital' is generally taken to mean the stock of skills and knowledge required to work and, hence, to produce economic value (Becker 1964).

as Ruth Levitas and others have argued (Levitas 1996; Holden 1999), the answer to the problems of poverty and social exclusion was viewed as integration into the labour market. In this respect, New Labour sought to differentiate itself from the previous Conservative government in refusing to tolerate long-term unemployment.

The notion that economic development was, therefore, a way of tackling social problems was built into New Labour's knowledge economy views from the start and was to become hugely influential on creative industries policy in terms of its perceived ability to contribute to economic regeneration, job creation and regional development (DCMS 2000a; London Development Agency 2003).

### **5.5 Shaping the new worker: Rights and Responsibilities**

As has been suggested, the notion of a knowledge economy was always broader than simply a set of changes occurring in the workplace. Indeed, it was sometimes referred to as the 'knowledge society' (Leadbeater 1999) as a way of suggesting not only the importance of knowledge in non-market areas, such as public services, but also the importance of non-market resources in making society work. Of course, the suggestion that capitalism requires social resources to make it work – trust, integrity, ties of community – that are not generated in the market, but elsewhere, is hardly new (Polyani 2001). Both traditional conservative and social democratic politics would have acknowledged this. **New Labour's version was to argue that these resources were best generated not in the traditional communities, beloved of conservatives, nor among the working class, trade unions or other versions of social democratic community, but in emergent, often workplace-based, networks of collaborative individuals (see Oakley 2006).**

The importance of the network idea for New Labour was that it could operate across social and economic policy areas and might offer a plausible 'ladder' for upward mobility from the disadvantaged and 'excluded' parts of post-1970s society (Christie and Perry 1997). The importance of collaborative networking in supporting innovation among firms and individuals was already widely acknowledged in accounts of post-Fordism (Grandori and Soda 1995; Mingione 1997), but under the influence of US thinkers such as Robert Putnam, the role of 'social capital'<sup>54</sup> in a wide range of non-economic spheres became of keen interest (Putnam 1995). The notion of social capital became influential in policy on children and young people (Department for

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<sup>54</sup> The term social capital (in Putnam's version) is taken to refer not only to the connections that people have but also to the ethical norms that those connections both require and develop.

Education and Skills 2003), citizenship (Cabinet Office 1999), volunteering (Department for Education and Skills 1999) and neighbourhood renewal (ODPM 2001). It influenced employment policy, including the New Deal (Department for Education and Employment 2000b), which, along with a subsidy to employers to take on the long-term unemployed, offered to connect the unemployed to employed people in a sort of mentoring scheme.

Putnam's argument was that (in the US) membership of a range of associations – from Rotary Clubs to, famously, bowling leagues – had fallen over the past 25 years; as this had implications for the willingness of people to trust others, it could result in a range of social problems from declining voting numbers to rising crime. While there was some suggestion that data in the UK showed less decline in community involvement (Hall 1997), levels of civic involvement among working-class people, and particularly the unemployed, were argued to be low – a factor increasing their risk of social exclusion<sup>55</sup>. Indeed, changes in the job market or, as one writer put it, 'the geographic mobility that Britain's economic restructuring increasingly demands' (Hall 1997:37), were seen to be further eroding working-class social capital based on locality or trade union membership.<sup>56</sup> **In this sense, a knowledge economy that demanded that workers were geographically mobile could be seen to be deleterious to traditional forms of social capital, which therefore had to be re-invented.**

Connecting people to networks of support and opportunity was thus believed to be a legitimate role for the state, and integration into the labour market – in however menial or casual a way – was viewed as the primary way of doing this (Lister 1998). This can be described as the restructuring of the welfare state around an activist and even coercive labour market policy. As Harriet Harman<sup>57</sup> commented in 1997, 'we are reforming the welfare state around the work ethic ... Promoting employability, adaptability and inclusion' (quoted in Lister 1998:220).

Underlying this stress on the importance of work, therefore, was not only an argument about the competitiveness of the economy but the notion that being employable could develop skills of adaptability and self-reliance (Barry 2005). The market not only required self-reliant individuals, it could also produce them, or as Benn puts it, 'New

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<sup>55</sup> The term 'social exclusion' was rarely used in UK policy circles prior to the 1997 election, which was shortly followed by the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit. In a UK context, the term is generally taken to refer to the multiple aspects of disadvantage – housing, health, education and so on – as well as to low incomes.

<sup>56</sup> See DeFilippis 2001 for a critique of this argument.

<sup>57</sup> Harriet Harman was at the time Secretary of State for Social Security.

Labour's emphasis has been less on the creation of jobs for the citizens-that-exist, than on the creation of citizens for the jobs-that-exist' (Benn 2000:314).

These re-modelled citizens could then take greater responsibility in a variety of areas that had previously been the domain of the national welfare state, including pension provision, higher education and even healthcare.<sup>58</sup>

However, it would be wrong to conclude that these responsibilities were, thus, utterly individualised; in many cases the notion of the network was invoked to suggest that groups of self-organising citizens, aided by public funding, could achieve more than state bureaucracies could. This was vital to the idea of 'social entrepreneurship' (Nicholls 2006) and to a variety of community projects, from 'self-direction' in health (Duffy et al. 2009),<sup>59</sup> transition towns looking to reduce dependence on fossil fuels,<sup>60</sup> to social and elderly care (Leadbeater and Lownsborough 2005).

This thesis argues that part of the attraction of the creative industries for New Labour policymakers was this role in shaping citizens: entrepreneurial, self-reliant, meritocratic in formation and outlook, but strongly networked and thus capable of integrating other citizens, even those deemed to be excluded.

The way that this shaped creative industries policy is the focus of the next section.

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<sup>58</sup> For critiques, see Jessop 2002 and Barry 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Duffy et al. 2009, Citizenship in Health, Discussion Paper.

<http://www.incontrol.org.uk/site/INCO/UploadedResources/Citizenship%20in%20Health%2020090713%20web.pdf>, retrieved 14 December 14 2009.

<sup>60</sup> Transition towns is the name given to a network of towns and cities that are exploring a variety of lower carbon ways of living, including housing, transport, waste etc(see [transitiontowns.org](http://transitiontowns.org)).

## 6. The knowledge economy becomes creative – New Labour's creative turn

The previous section argues that the idea of the knowledge economy is central to New Labour politics, not just in terms of economics but also in terms of social policy, and in the debate about social exclusion. The argument of this thesis is that the creative industries are emblematic of this concern with the knowledge economy,<sup>61</sup> and this section traces how those ideas were manifested in creative industries policy.

As van Heur says,

All policy documents on the creative industries are structured by one underlying assumption. This is the assumption that creativity will become increasingly important in the emerging KBE.<sup>62</sup> Every single document departs from this starting point; indeed, the current hype surrounding the creative industries is incomprehensible without this (2008:145).

In terms of published policy, those looking for theoretical background on the birth of the creative industries debate will find it more clearly expressed in the DTI White Paper on the knowledge economy (Department of Trade and Industry 1998), or in the collection of speeches by the first Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport,<sup>63</sup> published as *Creative Britain* (Smith 1998), than in the *Creative Industries Mapping Documents* (DCMS 1998, 2001a) with which it is more often associated (Volkerling 2001).

In sketching the background of creative industries, this section of the commentary draws on some unpublished material which reflects debates within the Arts Council England (Brunswick 1997; Hitchen 1997; Putnam and Ellis 1998) in the run up to, and

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<sup>61</sup> In saying that we can best understand the creative industries within the context of a knowledge economy discourse, I am not of course suggesting that it does not draw, and draw heavily, on other discourses. As I argue in Oakley 2009d, the ideas about cultural work reflect ideas about the arts that persist from Romanticism, albeit given a knowledge-economy flavour in terms of the perceived importance of innovation (see Oakley 2009c). And the supposed link between creative industries and social exclusion relies not only on the ideas of integration through work (Lister 1998) but also on ideas about democratic popular culture, which had informed cultural industries approaches in previous decades (Willis 1990; see also Oakley 2006, 2009a).

<sup>62</sup> KBE is van Heur's abbreviation for knowledge-based economy.

<sup>63</sup> This was the new name for the former Department of National Heritage, renamed in 1997.

aftermath of the 1997 election, as well as interviews with policy advisors.<sup>64</sup> In looking at implementation, it considers Creative London, one of the largest creative industry support programmes (London Development Agency 2003; Foord 2008; Deptford/Greenwich nd).

In doing so, it analyses some of the themes that fed into the creative industries and shaped its implementation. These include the ability of culture to regenerate places and its ability to generate employment and hence tackle social exclusion. The mechanism through which this would be achieved was again that beloved of New Labour thinkers – the network.

### **6.1 'Creativity is for people – arts for posh people'**

New Labour politicians were sensitive to the claim that the party was obsessed with presenting itself as modern. Chris Smith spoke of the complaint that talk of 'Cool Britannia' gave the impression that, in cultural terms, New Labour felt 'anything modern is good and anything traditional bad' (Smith 1998:4).

Instead he defended this as a desire to break down the distinction between 'high' and 'popular' culture, which was an issue at the core of cultural industries strategies (O'Connor 2009), and one that had pre-occupied arts policymakers in the years before the 1997 election (Lewis 1990; Hitchen 1997).

Since 1994, with the birth of the National Lottery,<sup>65</sup> the arts in the UK had experienced something of a boost (Putnam and Ellis 1998). A range of small grants under the rubrics of 'Arts 4 Everyone' and 'Arts 4 Everyone Express', together with other schemes, had allowed regional arts boards to pursue a range of initiatives, which often combined arts practice with wider social policy issues (BOP Consulting 2006; Selwood 2001). Many regional arts boards saw this as the opportunity to continue work on regional or local issues, which articulated a role for culture in responding both to industrial decline and to the promise of urban regeneration (Symon and Williams 2002; van Heur 2008).

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<sup>64</sup> These advisers included Graham Hitchen, former Policy Director for Arts Council England, and John Newbigin, former Special Advisor to the Rt Hon. Chris Smith, MP, as the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport.

<sup>65</sup> The National Lottery Act received Royal Assent in October 1993.

In doing this they were able to tap into significant non-arts funding sources, such as the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), City Challenge, the Urban Programme and the Single Regeneration Budget. For many, this meant not only operating across a wider range of policy areas – arts for health or arts in education, for example – but also with different partners, such as small cultural businesses, in what might be deemed popular culture, as well as subsidised arts organisations (O'Connor and Gu, forthcoming).

This blending of commercial and subsidised culture, or high and popular culture, had not only been part of cultural industries approaches, then, but it was also part of the activities of some regional arts bodies and local authorities. Within the Arts Council's national office it had both supporters and opponents. As Hughson and Inglis (2001) argue, opposition came, initially at least, not primarily from the Left, but from more conservative cultural critics. Nevertheless, it was strongly supported by those influential on New Labour cultural thinking, such as David Puttnam<sup>66</sup> (Puttnam and Ellis 1998).

In several Arts Council documents of the period, the vibrancy of the commercial cultural world is contrasted with what is perceived to be the precarious state of public arts funding. As one discussion paper for the Arts Council's strategy group, prepared in November 1997, puts it,

The state of the arts in Britain in the 1990s is characterised by an apparent paradox of, on one hand, financial instability within the public arts sector and on the other, thriving commercial success within the wider cultural industries (Hitchen 1997:1).

While music, design and the fashion industry are described as 'dynamic and innovative', the public arts economy is seen as 'highly unstable', heavily under-resourced and suffering from personnel problems exacerbated by low pay, weak training and development, and lack of career structures (Hitchen 1997).

The opportunity for the arts was seen as being placed within the wider creative industries or creative economy,<sup>67</sup> not only in terms of tapping into the perceived

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<sup>66</sup> Puttnam was both a Labour peer (from 1997 onwards) and a founding member of the Arts Council of England's National Lottery panel.

<sup>67</sup> This term was to become popular later in the period under consideration, but was already in use in 1997; see Smith 1998, for example.

dynamism of the commercial cultural sectors, but also in placing culture at the centre of regional development (DCMS 1999a, 2000a). In other words, this enshrined in central government policy what some regional arts authorities had been attempting to deliver for some time.

In doing so, it was building on a notion that had informed many cultural industry strategies, namely, that a democratic cultural policy could not ignore the fact that the culture most people consumed was produced in the market (Greater London Council 1985; Garnham 1990; O'Connor 2009). But it conceived of this in typically New Labour fashion. Patrician hierarchies of culture must be abandoned, but the market-led culture being invoked was not just that of big businesses, but that of networked, small firms, embedded within, and thus in some ways taken to be representative of, local communities.

Smith's *Creative Britain* claimed to be, amongst other things, 'a book about bringing democracy to culture' (1998:2), which he saw as promoting access to a culture that had moved beyond distinctions of 'high' and 'low'. Particularly in the context of his praise for the vibrancy of commercial culture, Smith seems to suggest a different notion of democracy from that of the GLC and other local authorities. As O'Connor (2009) argues, this was the notion that inspired cultural industries advocates' required public intervention to try and ensure a more democratic culture based on embedded local markets. Smith's line, however, echoed by Arts Council documents at the time, was in danger of *conflating* popular culture with democratic culture and, therefore, markets with democracy. This notion would have been completely alien to cultural industry advocates, who understood that as markets responded to ability to pay, which is unequally distributed, it might be necessary to intervene to ensure more democratic outcomes.

It is an argument that we see reflected and intensified in some more recent writing on the liberating power of creativity, particularly as embodied in digital technology and social networks (Potts et al. 2008). However, Smith's argument was less concerned with the potential of new media in allowing consumers to become producers, than with placing the subsidised arts sectors not at the side of, or as an alternative to, commercial culture, but very much within 'a vibrant, resourceful and robust cultural economy' (Hitchen nd:4). In so doing, it sought to re-legitimate the case for public arts funding, without which, Smith argued, we would have 'a very barren civilisation' (1998:18). It also sought to ensure that it was not seen as 'subsidy' for a minority interest but as an investment in a growing part of the economy.

The difficulty with this argument, and one which much later criticism of New Labour creative industries policy stresses (Hesmondhalgh 2002; O'Connor 2009), was not that New Labour suggested that the *only* reason for valuing the arts or creative industries was an economic one but that, in stressing its economic role, the historic tensions between culture and economy, the arts and commerce, were simply dissolved (Oakley 2006, 2009c, 2009d). Indeed, in this version, not only was there no tension, there was in fact positive synergy: 'the intrinsic cultural value of creativity sits side by side with, and acts in synergy with, the economic opportunities that are now opening up' (Smith 1998:26).

## **6.2 Creative Industries Policy and social exclusion**

New Labour's answer to those who felt that its creative industries policies stressed economic goals above all others was therefore constructed in two separate, but inter-related, parts. One, as discussed above, was to argue for the link between culture for its own sake and economic opportunity, or, as Smith puts it, 'learning how markets can best be helped to produce a synergy between producers, consumers and community' (Smith 1998:103).

The second was to stress the role of the creative industries in promoting social inclusion. This second argument drew directly not only on cultural industry strategies but also on the activities of regional arts boards over the previous decades (Chelliah 1999).

Social exclusion was firmly within the remit of the DCMS, almost from its creation, and certainly after the Policy Action Team (PAT) 10 report (DCMS 1999b). Policy Action Teams were set up by the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) to report on particular issues relating to social exclusion. PAT 10 was charged with looking at 'how to maximise the impact on poor neighbourhoods of Government spending on arts, sport and leisure' (DCMS 1999b:5).

Many of its recommendations thus concerned themselves with public arts and sports spending, but the role of the creative industries in creating employment for young, unemployed people was also seen as important. The fact that the creative industries could now be termed 'growing industries' meant that they could be explicitly linked to regeneration efforts, offering not only new jobs but 'powerful, positive role models for those living in deprived neighbourhoods', 'transferable skills' and 'the personal

confidence, flexibility and self-reliance on which success in the changing employment market increasingly depends' (DCMS 1999b:29).

This set the tone for many later creative industry policy documents, both regionally and nationally, in stressing not only job opportunities but also the personal characteristics associated with success (DCMS 2000a; Fleming 2003; Hartlepool Borough Council 2003; London Development Agency 2003; Greater London Authority 2004; Foord 2008). Yet, consistent with New Labour politics (Driver and Martell 1997; Bevir 2005), such personal development was also linked to community benefits. As a report entitled *Creative Industries: The regional dimension* argued (DCMS 2000a), while creative activities could both employ and empower individuals, they could also help develop 'community spirit' and, indeed, retain 'creative talent' in the regions, thus combating the UK's longstanding uneven economic development (see Oakley 2006).

### **6.3 The restructuring of space – Creative London**

The attempt to use creative industries as a tool of both economic and social development is exemplified by the series of measures bundled as Creative London, a London Development Agency initiative from about 2003 to 2006.<sup>68</sup> Its plan for 'creative hubs' was specifically aimed at areas of London that combined high levels of social and economic deprivation with evidence of creative industry small business activity (Foord 2008; Deptford/ Greenwich nd). Initiatives were to be 'particularly targeted at disenfranchised groups' and London's 'rich but divided' legacy of social polarisation was to be 'actively challenged' (London Development Agency 2003:15).

Creative hubs, however, were not simply places where a variety of services for creative industry firms could be provided; they also constituted an attempt to create a new geography of public agencies within London. Building in some cases on the presence and contacts of long-standing community arts organisations (Foord 2008), the hubs strategy was an attempt both to bypass existing local authority structures<sup>69</sup> and to give new agencies, particularly those representing community organisations, funding to spend on economic development.

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<sup>68</sup> I say 'about' because although Creative London was officially launched, it was not officially closed until 2007, but before that its focus was changed dramatically from place-based economic development towards the support of specific sectors, such as film or design.

<sup>69</sup> The Kings Cross 'hub', Create KX, for example, was on the border of the London boroughs of Camden and Islington.

As van Heur (2008) comments, this acknowledged the role in creative industries played by non-profit cultural organisations, albeit one that linked them explicitly to the notion of wealth creation. But it also represented a particular kind of 'spatial selectivity' (Jessop 2002; Brenner 2004) through which public funding privileged certain spaces at the expense of others. In the case of Creative London, the spaces thus privileged were chosen because they seemed capable of being the next creative 'hot spot'. Rather than simply allowing an artistic boom to develop, as had happened in the case of Hoxton (Evans 2004; Pratt 2009),<sup>70</sup> there was an explicit acknowledgement of the need for spatial redistribution to spread economic activity and of the need to mitigate gentrification and displacement, even if the legislative tools to do so – in planning for example – were insufficient.

The reason that this could be done, it was believed, was not only that public intervention would ensure that some property remained out of the hands of developers (Foord 2008), but also that creative industries were intrinsically linked to popular culture. Any attempt to expand them would therefore release the talents of, in New Labour terminology, the many not the few.

This is captured, for example, in the description of one of the hubs, 'Creative Lewisham',<sup>71</sup> and its plans for the re-development of Deptford. Deptford's ethnically diverse population is described here as 'an enormous creative asset', but one that was under-capitalised. The document goes on to state,

This combination of high levels of deprivation, low levels of economic activity, and high levels of economically inactive individuals from BME backgrounds, points to a challenge and an opportunity for the local Creative Industries sector: economic inactivity may be widespread; cultural/ creative inactivity is not; much of the cultural/ creative activity might be supported towards economic activity (Deptford/ Greenwich nd:52).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Hoxton refers to the area of East London associated with the 'BritArt' boom and its associated gentrification.

<sup>71</sup> Lewisham was one of the LDA's 'creative hubs'.

<sup>72</sup> Deptford/Greenwich, nd, Deptford/Greenwich a creative hub: A framework document, <http://www.creativelewishamagency.org.uk/documents/DeptfordGreenwichCreativeHub-aframeworkdocument.pdf>, retrieved 16 December 2009.

And, in turn, it was felt that this economic activity would produce 'new, innovative, syncretic Creative processes, products and services' in addition to 'advancing community relations' (Deptford/ Greenwich nd:52).

We can see here New Labour rhetoric about entrepreneurship as distinct from the Thatcherite version, in its stress on the importance of collaborative networks (Bevir 2005). Knowledge economies were seen to demand this sort of collaboration, (Leadbeater 1999). But in the case of creative industries, this was combined with perceived attachment to place and traditions of popular culture, meaning that 'creative entrepreneurs may be individualistic, but they were collaborative; they may be competitive, but they were 'concerned' (Oakley 2006:262).

As a form of the knowledge economy, therefore, creative industries were seen by New Labour to deliver on political aspirations across a variety of areas. They offered rewards and, in a few cases, fame to the talented and entrepreneurial, thus neutralising the appeal of Conservative politics to the aspirational, as the 'New Times' thinkers had advocated (Murray 1988). But the skills needed to collaborate in these sectors was viewed as more widely beneficial, generating the sort of social capital (Putnam 1995) that was felt to be the key to a whole range of social improvement.

## **6.4 Good work**

As Banks and Hesmondhalgh have stated, the premise for many creative industry support initiatives was that the kind of work provided by the creative industries was 'inherently progressive' (2009:416). It combined elements of the knowledge economy with 'post-Fordist socialism' (Thompson 2002) in that much of it took place in small, highly networked firms. But the nature of the work itself, its connection to older forms of craft labour, its association with individual expression and non-alienating employment and, in a few cases, with fame and fortune, could all be constructed as a story of good, even ideal, work (see Oakley 2009b).

Indeed there was no lack of support for some of these arguments from workers in the creative industries themselves. As various writers have noted, interviews with creative workers often reveal a high degree of attachment to work (Throsby and Hollister 2003; McRobbie 2006). Gill argues, 'sociologists of work would be hard-pressed to find another group of workers who expressed similar levels of passion both for the work itself and for the field more generally' (2007:14).

At the same time, the numbers studying subjects such as arts and design at university continued to increase.<sup>73</sup> This increase produces its own problems, with high levels of part-time and casual work in the sector, and restricted entry points, many of which require unpaid work for long periods while people gain the necessary connections and experience to apply for paid work (Oakley 2009b, 2009d).

However, at least until the publication of *Creative Britain* (DCMS 2008), policy on creative industries concerned itself with supporting small businesses and expanding related training and education; little attention was paid to conditions of labour. This was entirely consistent with other aspects of New Labour's labour market policy, where the role of the 'enabling state' was to help people become fit for the labour market, not to concern itself with what happened within it (Jessop 2002; Bevis 2005).

Added to this was Chris Smith's notion of the synergy between creativity and growth (Smith 1998). As stated above, the tension between culture and commerce was to be dissolved; notions like 'selling out' could be safely discarded, and the historic opposition of 'artist' and 'businessman' no longer operated.<sup>74</sup> In part this was simply a recognition of the fact that many of those working in small cultural businesses, as animators, web-designers, comedy club managers or DJs, were happy to regard themselves as small businesses or entrepreneurs, and did not necessarily recognise themselves as part of the 'arts' (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999; Banks 2007).

But from the late 1990s onwards, these ideas were added to by a notion of 'creativity' that was independent of specifically cultural activities and was touted as the future of employment everywhere (see Oakley et al. 2008; Oakley 2009c).

As Banaji et al. (2006) discuss, the term 'creativity' performed a wide range of discursive functions. It drew on leftist ideas of the 'ordinariness' of creativity (Willis 1990) and married this to an economic imperative, suggesting not only that creativity was everywhere, but that it *had* to be if we were to thrive economically. Along the way, it also took on board notions of creativity as a social good – an idea particularly important to the influential National Advisory Committee on Creativity and Cultural

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<sup>73</sup> According to Creative and Cultural Skills, in 2004/5 there were 180,000 courses in creative and cultural fields. There were 31,000 course providers and over half a million students at FE and HE level were studying in the sector. In 2005, not taking into account replacement jobs, there were only 6,000 new vacancies advertised in the creative and cultural industries. See <http://www.ccskills.org.uk/Industrystrategies/Thebigissues/Entrytothesectors/tabid/104/Default.aspx>, retrieved 17 December 2009.

<sup>74</sup> For critiques, see Oakley 2009b and 2009d.

Education – which led to the formation of the Creative Partnerships initiative in schools (Robinson and NACCCE 1999).

As the first line of the DCMS's report on *'Culture and creativity: the next ten years'* makes clear, 'Everyone is creative ... Creative skills are necessary for success in all areas of life, not just in the world of culture, media and the arts' (2001c:5).

As I argue elsewhere (Oakley 2009c), 'creativity' here becomes a generic skill or aptitude, widely required because of its supposed connection with economic innovation, on one hand, and personal resilience on the other (Seltzer and Bentley 1999). This notion was developed in that year's DTI/DfEE joint publication on skills and innovation, *Opportunity for all in a world of change* (2001),<sup>75</sup> and in later years in the *Cox Review of Creativity in British Business* (Cox 2005).

I have discussed the implications of this broad notion of creativity for cultural policy (in Oakley 2009c), but here the point is simply that in dissolving creativity into an economic imperative in the development of a knowledge economy, any historic notion of the relative autonomy of cultural activities, or of opposition between cultural workers and the prevailing political culture, appeared lost (Banks and Hesmondhalgh 2009).

However, this did not mean that the cultural entrepreneurs who were the targets of these interventions embraced the language of economic development or commerce uncritically (as outlined in Oakley 2009d). As Banks has argued (Banks 2007:120), many cultural workers were motivated by 'a convergence of aesthetic and socio-ethical' tendencies. For them, economic development did not dissolve all tension between the cultural and the economic, any more than the term 'selling out' had disappeared from their vocabulary (see Oakley et al. 2008; Oakley 2009d).

I have argued above that New Labour's understanding of the knowledge economy helped inform not only its economic policies but also those in a range of other public policy areas. In the case of the creative industries, it fused with notions about the nature of creative work and the ability of these sectors to release talent and aspiration, which were essential to the New Labour response to Thatcherism.

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<sup>75</sup> See Department of Trade and Industry/Department for Education and Employment, *Opportunity for all in a changing world, White Paper on Enterprise, Skills and Innovation*, London: DTI/DfEE, 2001.

Many of my publications, discussed briefly in the section below, are concerned with critiquing these assumptions and analysing what happened, particularly in terms of the labour market and economic development. The issues that this raises both for research and for policy are discussed in Section 8.

## 7. The publications

This section of the Commentary provides a very brief introduction to the publications in Section 9, and seeks to explain the provenance and rationale of each.

All of these pieces were written as 'stand alone' publications. There is, thus, an inevitable degree of repetition. For example, treatment of the shift from cultural to creative industries, or the influence of Richard Florida's work, needed to be made on various occasions to establish the context for the paper.

These publications were selected for submission as part of my PhD because they discuss the idea of creative industries as it emerged (Oakley 2004a, 2009c), the way it was used to develop regional knowledge economies (Oakley 2006, 2009a) and the specific issues of cultural labour markets (Oakley et al. 2008; Oakley 2009b, 2009d).

In terms of methodology or approach, the papers range from informal 'commentary' pieces (such as Oakley 2004a) to more structured research (Oakley et al. 2008, for example). Rather than representing methodological 'development', this simply reflects the range of approaches that I have employed over time in consultancy, policy and academic work.

The vagaries of publishing timescales means that published dates do not correspond to dates of writing, and hence to the development of the ideas. Given this, I have treated the publications in order of writing, not of publication, below.

### 7.1 Not So Cool Britannia

The first of these, *Not So Cool Britannia* (Oakley 2004a), was born directly out of the Demos work (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999, 2001) discussed in Section 3.1. This originated as a paper given at a symposium at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Brisbane, in December 2002. I was invited as someone who had been associated with the development of creative industries policy in the UK, and as a practicing consultant, and the paper very much reflects that. It was constructed as an opinion piece, setting out what I considered as problems arising in creative

industries policy across the UK. These problems are taken up and developed in the later publications.

The paper presented essentially two critiques, one of which might be described as a policy critique and reflected my alarm at the 'hijacking' of creative industries policy 'to support the more dangerous aspects of new economy ideology' (76). By this, I meant the idea that this form of economic development appeared to be essentially benign, offered 'good work' and could be applied to areas of the country suffering from high unemployment and economic decline. While it offered an optimistic account of the future of work, it seemed to me to neglect underlying conditions of social and geographic inequality.

The second critique was that many of these developments, and the claims that supported them, were being taken forward in the face of weak empirical evidence about effectiveness or potential impacts. I acknowledged that at the time (in 2002) many of these developments were in the early stages, but expressed concern that so few long-term research projects were being put in place, especially by a government that was, by then, expressing its commitment to evidence-based policymaking (Selwood 2002; Pawson 2003; Wells 2004<sup>76</sup>). This point was picked up by later writers, for example, Chapain and Comunian, who argued that while there had been a variety of mapping and scoping studies over the period, 'there has been no consistent assessment of the local and regional dimension of the creative economy' (2009:2).

Bell (2007) described *Not So Cool Britannia* as personalised and confessional, which, he argued, might be the only way of writing about consultancy work in an academic context, given the differences between the two modes of discourse (see Section 3.3, above). The advantage of the insider narrative, however, is that one is less likely to be dismissed as a 'usual suspect' in making a critical intervention.<sup>77</sup>

## 7.2 Include us out

The second publication, *Include us out* (Oakley 2006), was published in *Cultural Trends* in December 2006. It sets out to explore further some of the contradictions and tensions in policy that I had identified in the previous publication, and in particular to

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<sup>76</sup> Accessed July 27, 2009.

<sup>77</sup> Other critical pieces in the special issue, for example, Miller, Pratt and Couldry's (2004), came from academics better known for taking a sceptical line on the concept of creative industries.

scrutinise the attempt to link the goal of greater economic competitiveness and enhanced social inclusion through the development of the creative industries. The paper describes this as characteristic of an attempt to combine social and economic goals, which were turning out to be in conflict, and thus explicitly connects creative industries to the politics of New Labour – a notion this commentary develops further.

The second part of the paper examines these conflicts as they apply in three areas: work and labour markets, the geography of creative industries, and regeneration. The two sections on work deal primarily with labour market representation and the links between lack of diversity in the workforce and informal recruitment practices.

At this stage in my writing, these observations were not linked to academic work on cultural labour markets, which was to be the theme of later publications. Indeed, they suggest, somewhat excessively, that knowledge of these conflicts and contradictions is highest among 'creative intermediaries' (Fleming 2004), among whom I number consultants, as well as those academics directly involved in these debates via such forums as FOCI.<sup>78</sup> The paper would have benefited from an analysis of the academic literature on labour markets, though its approach is very much that of a concerned practitioner, an 'insider' (as in Oakley 2004a, above).

The paper explores what one might call the economic geography of the creative industries, drawing on secondary data to examine the dominance of London and the South East in creative industries and more general knowledge economy employment. The work of US economic geographer Richard Florida is considered briefly at the end of the paper, a theme that is developed in the next publication (Oakley 2009a).

### **7.3 Getting out of place: the mobile creative class takes on the local**

Florida's growing influence on creative industries policy in the UK was becoming apparent by the time this paper was written (around 2005/6). His 2002 book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, was, in academic terms at least, a best-seller. He had conducted high-profile speaking engagements in cities such as Manchester,<sup>79</sup> and Demos's 'Boho Britain Index' used some of Florida's indicators to rank UK cities in terms

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<sup>78</sup> See footnote 18.

<sup>79</sup> For example, Florida appeared with local hero Anthony Wilson, founder of Factory Records, at a 'National Competitiveness Summit' in Manchester, October 2005.

of 'creative potential'.<sup>80</sup> Then-Secretary of State James Purnell referred to the importance of Florida's work in his 2005 speech on 'Making Britain the World's Creative Hub' (Purnell 2005).

By the mid-2000s, those of us working as consultants in creative industries had become used to clients in local authorities and regional development agencies constantly invoking Florida's work. My frustration at this, and at what I felt was the inappropriateness of Florida's work for the UK situation, particularly in regional cities and towns away from the metropolis, lay behind this publication.<sup>81</sup>

The publication developed from a paper given at a symposium on 'Creative Cities; Creative Economies' in Shanghai in October 2006. The aim of the symposium was to explore the notion of 'creative cities' as they had developed both within and outside the European and North American context. I was asked to look in particular at the reception and understanding of Florida's work on economic development policy in the UK.

Despite being entitled a 'UK Perspective' the publication surveys international receptions of Florida's work. It raises three primary concerns: methodological concerns about Florida's indices; questions about the appropriateness of his policy prescriptions in a non-US context; and concerns about the political implications of adopting a Floridian strategy. The paper continued a concern with the polarising nature of this form of economic development, first raised in Oakley 2004a.

## **7.4 The Art of Innovation**

*The Art of innovation* (Oakley et al. 2008) is somewhat different from the other submitted publications, partly because it is co-written,<sup>82</sup> but more importantly because it was a commissioned piece of research designed to look at particular issues, and thus it was more 'constrained' in expression than the others. In particular it was subject to a fairly rigorous and contested editing process.

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<sup>80</sup> See, 'Manchester is Favourite with New Bohemians', Demos Press Release, 27 May 2003, [http://www.demos.co.uk/press\\_releases/bohobritain](http://www.demos.co.uk/press_releases/bohobritain).

<sup>81</sup> This paper was written in 2006 but not published until 2009, in Kong and O'Connor 2009.

<sup>82</sup> I was the primary researcher on the paper and conducted 35 out of the 40 interviews. I wrote the literature review jointly with Brooke Sperry; I wrote the rest of the report while Brooke was in charge of the online survey. Andy Pratt acted as an advisor on the project. Co-author statements are reproduced in Appendix 1.

The work was commissioned by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) as part of a series of research projects concerning the relationship between the arts and cultural sectors, and innovation in the economy beyond the cultural sectors. This was the only one of the commissioned projects that took an essentially qualitative approach to the topic, which was something of a struggle, given NESTA's general quantitative research stance.<sup>83</sup>

My interest in the project lay primarily in the opportunity to do some in-depth interviewing with cultural workers – in this case fine arts graduates – working (for the most part) in the cultural and creative industries. The interviews conducted for the study also provided the material for Oakley 2009d.

While not endorsing the notion of 'creativity' as an explanation for economic growth, the starting point of the study was the fact that many more arts and design graduates are being produced in the UK now than in the past. Beyond the expansion of the cultural and creative sectors themselves, it sought to explore what, if anything, their work within other sectors of the economy could tell us about the changing nature of the wider economy.

The study set out to explore three hypotheses that have been advanced for this phenomenon.<sup>84</sup> These included the argument (Lester and Piore 2004) that those with a cultural education are important in 'third generation innovation',<sup>85</sup> due to their particular training, their disposal towards critical thinking and their close understanding of consumer needs.

The second hypothesis is that it is the way cultural labour is organised, in small, highly networked firms, as well as the less desirable aspects of cultural labour markets (such as unpaid work), which makes it a prototype for other forms of work organisation (Ross 2003). This aspect of the work is more fully discussed in Oakley 2009c and 2009d, as it was not an element of the debate that NESTA were particularly interested in pursuing.

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<sup>83</sup> See Higgs, Cunningham and Bakhshi 2008 or Stoneman 2009, both of which were commissioned at the same time.

<sup>84</sup> The argument that there is increased absorption simply follows from the fact that there are much higher numbers of arts and design graduates than in the past, most of whom find employment sooner or later.

<sup>85</sup> Although far from a settled definition, 'third generation innovation' is generally taken to refer to the closer relationship between production and consumption. This is most significant in technologies like open source software; but even in more traditional production processes, users play an increasing role, as in the customisation of high fashion into 'street fashion', which is then reproduced by manufacturers, or in the modifying of videogames by users.

The final hypothesis is what one might call the 'culturisation' thesis, advanced, among others, by Lash and Lury (2007). This argues that cultural products are no longer primarily symbolic, but that cultural ideas and images are increasingly a part of non-cultural products and services. In a sense, this is a variation of the 'creativity' notion, advanced by NESTA and others (e.g., Cox 2005; Cunningham 2006), but it is a more complex and subtle version of that argument (see Oakley 2009c).

*The Art of Innovation* began with a narrative literature review, which looked at the following: how the arts fit within conceptions of the cultural economy, some of the literature on cultural labour markets and the careers of arts and design graduates, and the literature on the geography of cultural labour. An extended literature review was published as a working paper by NESTA in March 2008 (Oakley and Sperry 2008); the literature review in the final publication is a greatly edited version of that.

The findings of the study relating to innovation are not germane to the topic of this PhD, so will not be discussed here. The hypothesis about the nature of work is developed further in Oakley 2009d.

The failure to address labour issues fully in the report was criticised by some commentators (McRobbie and Folkert 2009), who also suggest that its vocabulary of innovation is 'something of a discursive imposition' (24). It would be more accurate to say that debates about the *nature* of innovation (how to define it, whether it is a process or an end result, how it can be measured) were among the issues contested by authors and client; and this may account for some awkwardness in the phrasing of these issues within the report. The report was subject to particularly heavy editing in the final stages, and the use of frequent sub-titles (insisted on by NESTA) often serve to diminish rather than aid the argument.

However, the paper does provide evidence for what I have come to see as a divergence between policymakers' views of the role of cultural and creative industries – and in particular of notions of 'creativity' abstracted from cultural production – and those of practitioners (2009c:37). This has implications for the attempt, so much a feature of creative industries policy, to dissolve opposition between cultural and economic activity, a theme that is picked up by the final three publications.

## 7.5 From Bohemia to Britart

The second publication that drew on the interviews described above is *From Bohemia to Britart – Art Students over 50 years* (Oakley 2009d). It was first presented at a conference on Arts, Culture and the Public Sphere, organised by the European Sociological Association (ESA) in Venice, in November 2008.

The paper explores how, and in what ways, the attitudes of cultural practitioners to their work had changed over a period of some 40 years (graduates from the 1960s to 2000s were interviewed). It drew on the academic literature on cultural labour, an analysis of which had been carried out (for Oakley 2009b, published as *Art Works*, see below); but it provided an empirically based view of these debates from the perspective of cultural workers themselves.

*From Bohemia to Britart* engaged with contemporary debates about the nature of cultural labour and its relationship to the idea of 'precarious' labour (Lloyd 2006; Mitropoulos 2006<sup>86</sup>; Gill and Pratt 2008; Ross 2009).<sup>87</sup> It questioned the potential for a coherent politics of this labour arising from the mix of social and status groups that are now precariously employed. In part, this is because of class differences, and in part it is because of the distinction that interviewees made between artistic work and 'other' work, and the privileging of artistic work in their discourse.

This represents a development of my earlier writing about the kinds of work that the cultural sectors produce (Oakley 2004a, 2006) – a concern that had extended from the polarising nature of the labour market – and came to encompass the nature of work *within* these sectors. It offers a critical commentary on the ideas of post-Fordist socialism discussed in Section 5, above. But it also seeks to explore – in a context in which we are told that there has been a fusion of high and low culture, the arts and wider creativity (Smith 1998) – the ways in which artists themselves continue to make distinctions about their work and cultural practice.

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<sup>86</sup> Accessed October 27, 2008.

<sup>87</sup> Precarious labour is generally understood as casualised or insecure forms of work.

## 7.6 Art Works

*Arts Works* was also commissioned, in this instance by the Arts Council's Creative Partnerships initiative.<sup>88</sup> However, it was part of a series of literature reviews<sup>89</sup> and thus allows for, indeed demands, a discursive and critical approach. The series is aimed at 'concerned professionals', which may be taken to include teachers and arts educators, policymakers and funders, as well as interested academics. Editorial advice therefore tends to be concerned with comprehensibility for the envisaged audience, rather than tone or 'message'.

The paper draws on academic literature from sociology (Miege 1989; Ryan 1992), cultural economics (Throsby 1992; Towse 1992), economic geography (Pratt 2002) and cultural studies (McRobbie 2002; Miller et al. 2004), as well as more policy-influenced work. In this respect it provides a more comprehensive overview of the literature that informs this thesis than any of the other single publications.

However, as a narrative literature review<sup>90</sup> it also concentrates on particular themes, including the extent to which cultural work can be seen as a harbinger of other forms of work, ideas of precarious labour and self-exploitation, and the implications of these themes for debates about the quality of work provided by a 'knowledge economy'. The publication concludes with a short debate about the implications for labour market policy – a subject that informs my current research.

## 7.7 The disappearing arts

The final publication was a long time in development. Earlier versions of it were given at the RGS-IBG conference in 2006, and to the Open University in 2008. The paper recapitulates some of the arguments presented in earlier papers but interrogates more thoroughly what I argue is a non-cultural notion of creativity that dominates current policy thinking, and the potential impact of these changes on arts policy, a subject which has not specifically featured in earlier publications.

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<sup>88</sup> Until 2009 the entire programme was known as Creative Partnerships, though this is now the name of a programme under the umbrella of an organisation called Creativity, Culture and Education. It is no longer part of Arts Council England. At the time of commissioning, the organisation was known as Creative Partnerships.

<sup>89</sup> Others referenced in this thesis include Banaji et al. 2006 and O'Connor 2007.

<sup>90</sup> I am here distinguishing between a narrative literature review that, while aiming for comprehensiveness, selects publications according to particular themes, as opposed to a systematic literature review, which seeks to identify and synthesise all research above a certain quality threshold deemed relevant to the question.

The paper traces the shift in policymaker terminology, from 'cultural' to 'creative' and from 'creativity' to 'innovation', which has taken place over the years since 1997, and argues that this represents a changing set of priorities. The concern with growing the creative industries as a part of the economy that animated the Creative Industries Taskforce, for example, has been replaced by seeing them largely as an 'input' into other parts of the economy and a driver of innovation (Potts et al. 2008).

This has implications for arts and cultural policy, as well as the creative industries. Indeed, I argue that we may be witnessing a breakdown of the approach, which, by collapsing the distinction between high and popular culture, sought to develop policies for the mixed economy of culture that most consumers inhabit (Lewis 1990). The dangers of this are a retreat to a reactionary, high-arts policy on one hand, and an 'economic' policy for popular culture – popular music, videogames, television – that ignores concerns other than that of growing the market, on the other.

This final publication suggests that the New Labour policy moment, and possibly the discourse of creative industries in its current form, is drawing to a close, a claim that seems almost too apposite for the final publication in a thesis of this nature. However, even if this is so, as the next section suggests, this leaves a number of research and policy questions that still need to be addressed.

## 8. Conclusions

This final section presents the implications of my work, a brief discussion of what seem to me to be the gaps in current academic work and the potential research directions arising.

### 8.1 The implications of the work

The commentary and the publications presented here have attempted to contextualise creative industries as they are understood and enacted in a UK context within the politics of New Labour. The advantage of undertaking a PhD by prior publication<sup>91</sup> is that one can consider the development of these issues over time – in this case a period of time almost exactly co-terminus with New Labour. By this, I do not necessarily mean the period in office, but the period represented by a particular understanding and promotion of the knowledge economy. The discourse of the knowledge economy has far from disappeared (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2009), but the financial crisis of 2008 has brought a particular political moment, one characterised by undiluted faith in markets and particularly in the 'immaterial' aspects of economic activities, to an end.

Although my thesis touches on areas of cultural policy, and stresses the links between cultural and creative industry policies (see Oakley 2009c), I have tried to avoid what I believe to be a common failing in writing about cultural policy, which treats it as outside other public policy issues. These include the tendency towards the self-referential in cultural policy writing, and an over-statement of the importance of purely cultural policies in the production, distribution and consumption of cultural products. By contrast, examining the development and dissemination of creative industries policy allows us to examine the way the New Labour government sought to combine economic, social and cultural goals by introducing a new concept to public policy, and by acting as an enabler in bringing together different policy and market actors.

In line with other work on New Labour (Thompson 2002; Finalyson 2003; Bevir 2005), I have tried to analyse New Labour politics in the context of its historical years in

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<sup>91</sup> It may also be the same for a conventional PhD, depending on the time taken to complete it.

opposition to Thatcherism, and consequent development of its own politics as a variety of neoliberalism, albeit one with a stronger stress on the importance of social networks and the social norms that underlay them.

I have argued that it was the fatalistic acceptance of its own narrative of the knowledge economy which underlay New Labour's approach to creative industries. The 'reality' of place-based competition undermined the government's own attempts to use creative industry developments to support a more balanced regional economy (DCMS 2000a; Oakley 2006). The unwillingness to deal with concentration of market power meant that many of the issues of distribution and ownership, central to previous cultural industry approaches, were ignored (Garnham 2005). Its belief in the inherently democratic nature of small-business ownership and the liberating power of entrepreneurship meant that it paid no attention to the sometimes exploitative conditions of creative labour markets (Oakley 2009b, 2009d).

Later publications have focused on the issues of work in cultural labour markets, which I believe to be not only an under-developed area in public policy, but also one which offers a promising avenue for future research.

## **8.2 Under-researched areas in this field**

Given the small amount of funded academic research on the cultural and creative industries, it is not surprising that one can point to a variety of areas that, in an ideal world, would be more thoroughly covered. As Hesmondhalgh and Pratt (2005) argue, while the cultural and creative industries in their commercial sphere produce quantities of market research and tracking data, it is generally not of a sort that can be used to inform policymaking or academic research.

The well-attested problems of Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, and the statistical basis for research, means that quantitative work in this area can only ever provide a partial account. The DCMS *Creative Industry Economic Estimates* are a case in point, providing a useful overview of the development of the sector since 2001, but which, by their own admission, are insufficiently robust to be classed as National Statistics (DCMS 2009).

In addition, there is a scarcity of research that examines the 'full production cycle' of culture, taking in the range of activity from idea to manufacture, distribution and

consumption. Instead, such work seems to have been rather hijacked by the as yet unsuccessful attempts to measure 'creativity' across the economy.<sup>92</sup>

Although studies of cultural labour have increased (Oakley 2009b), there remains a lack of empirical research in this area. Research on the subsidised arts sectors undertaken by cultural economists (e.g., Towse 1996; Menger 1999) often examines the organisation or management of work (Bilton 2006; Townley and Beech 2010) rather than the experiences of workers. Studies of worker experiences tend to be directed to the media or new media sectors, perhaps because many of these writers come from a cultural studies or cultural industries background, and are thus more interested in the media sectors (Gill 2007; Ursell 1998, 2000; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008).

Although there has been some research, largely in the USA, on the links between the commercial, not-for-profit and subsidised sectors (Markusen et al. 2006), there is still little work on related themes such as volunteering or other forms of not-for-profit work, which constitutes a major gap in an area currently the focus of public policy attention (DCMS 2008). **The 'precarity' of cultural work is not confined to the media sectors, yet those in the arts are rarely the focus of research into precarious labour markets.**

I have commented (in Oakley 2004a) on the lack of longitudinal research in the creative industries, and indeed almost nothing<sup>93</sup> has been put in place since then that allows one to track the development of policy initiatives. Scullion and Garcia argue that the prevalence of consultancy work in the whole field of cultural policy has made it 'difficult to develop a coherent body of research and near impossible to develop longitudinal projects' (2005:122), but it is not clear to me why this should be the case. Consultants are no less likely to welcome longitudinal work than academics and, indeed, do conduct such research where possible.<sup>94</sup> More likely, the problem simply stems from the relative marginality of cultural and creative industries policy work within the research funding councils<sup>95</sup> and the short-term nature of much cultural funding more generally.

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<sup>92</sup> See Oakley 2009c for discussion of this.

<sup>93</sup> That is, almost nothing beyond statistical work, like the DCMS Economic Estimates and the GLA's work on London's Creative Industries.

<sup>94</sup> BOP Consulting, for example, is currently undertaking a three-year study of volunteering, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

<sup>95</sup> Funding for academic research in this area falls between the remits of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and is thus included in the list of areas where the research councils share responsibility. According to their joint statement on subject coverage (AHRC/ESRC nd), Communication,

A major gap, particularly in a discourse that has become internationalised (Cunningham 2009a), is internationally comparative work. While there is some consideration of the globalised discourse of creative industries (Wang 2004; Jürisson 2007; Prince 2009; van Heur 2008), there is little empirical work that compares actual policy development, funding or regulation across nations,<sup>96</sup> or that looks at the relationship between the creative industries and allied notions such as the arts, on an internationally comparative basis.

Despite Flew's accusation (2009)<sup>97</sup> that the notion of neoliberalism acts as barrier to sustained examination of the relationship between culture and the wider economy, I would argue that the opposite is the case. Although it is the focus of this commentary, hitherto, there is little work that looks at creative industries policy as an aspect of the changing modern state, public policy and government. Insufficient research has engaged with ideas about changing modes of neoliberal government and placed such ideas as the creative industries within them. Despite the current financial and environmental crises, what is striking is the continued a-political, or even anti-political, nature of much recent writing on the creative industries (Potts 2007; Bakhshi et al. 2009; Cunningham 2009b).<sup>98</sup>

### 8.3 Future research and policy directions

The above gaps in the literature provide fruitful avenues for future research. The more immediate policy question is this: if we are indeed at the end of a particular policy moment (Banks and O'Connor 2009), at least in the UK, what does this mean for creative industries in terms of future policy development.

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Cultural and Media Studies and Cultural Policy and Management, both of which may touch on creative industries, these are 'shared interests' between the two research councils. See AHRC-ESRC joint statement (nd) on subject convergence: Interfaces between the Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences, at ESRC: *Society Today*, [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/AHRCandESRCstatementfinalversion\\_tcm6-16145.pdf](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/AHRCandESRCstatementfinalversion_tcm6-16145.pdf), retrieved 08 March 2010.

<sup>96</sup> O'Connor's 2005 work on creative industries in St Petersburg is an exception to this.

<sup>97</sup> T. Flew, 2009, The cultural economy moment? *Cultural Science*, <http://cultural-science.org/journal/index.php/culturalscience/issue/view/>, retrieved 18 January 2009.

<sup>98</sup> By a-political, I mean work that treats the market economy as a 'natural' phenomenon, rather than the result of a political settlement. As Mirowski (2009) argues, such writers are often keen on metaphors from the natural sciences to describe political and economic processes, such as the evolution of economic systems (see, for example, Hartley et al. 2008). By 'anti-political' I mean work that explicitly treats political critique as an unhelpful barrier to the proper engagement of academia with prevailing economic discourse (Flew 2009, see URL, in footnote above).

I have argued (in Oakley 2009c and Section 7.7, above) here that the distinctiveness of creative industries as a policy term may be lost in the near future as it is absorbed into a broader discourse of innovation, on one hand, and an arts discourse, on the other. This could return us to an idea of the 'arts' as subsidised activities and the technology-driven media sectors as commercial. The significance of this in research terms is that attempts to understand the complex ecology of cultural production, across market, public and voluntary spheres, which I would argue is the way culture is actually produced, may also be endangered.

Cultural research, always marginal in terms of public funding, is likely to be further weakened in an economic climate of overall cuts and re-direction of research funds towards science and technology (STEM) subjects (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2009). Those interested in the links between the creative industries and innovation are likely to continue to stress that line of argument (Bakhshi et al. 2009), and this may offer a way of tapping STEM research funds. The danger of this is that while the need for a more critical appraisal of innovation, and one which is less deterministic, has never seemed more necessary,<sup>99</sup> those pushing for a Schumpeterian approach to innovation studies, and indeed to the creative industries, seem unlikely to deliver one (Potts 2007).

As others have pointed out, creative industries as a discourse is by now truly globalised (Cunningham 2009a; Prince 2009). Even if the notion is subject to deconstruction in the land of its birth, a concern with the growth of the cultural and creative sectors is unlikely to disappear from the policy lexicon altogether. Whether a more resource-constrained world can continue to invest in the highly differentiated consumerism that so bewitched New Labour policymakers (Hall 1988; Murray 1988) is a medium-term question. In the shorter term, policymaker interest in the creative industries from Sweden to South Korea (Kong et al. 2006; Power 2009) suggests that research will continue to develop which scrutinises the understanding and adoption of these notions in different political and economic regimes. It is to be hoped that, in addition, it will offer a better understanding of the global distribution of labour and consumption in which creative industries are embedded (as, for example, in Miller et al. 2004).

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<sup>99</sup> See Bullen, Robb and Kenway 2004 and Edgerton 2006, for discussion of further critical approaches to innovation.

The production and consumption of cultural products, and indeed the links between production and consumption, will doubtless be the subject of more empirical work in future. It is here, perhaps, that the most serious questions can be asked about the degree to which the creative industries constitute a progressive approach towards economic development. Should we continue to support these developments, without asking questions about conditions of labour and of consumption? The ubiquity and sophistication of digital technology is leading to the collapse of traditional revenue and business models (Deuze 2007). Can and should we resist these changes and, if not, what are the implications for those who work in the creative industries?

But it is also perhaps a good time to return to the questions which animated leftist thinkers in the 1980s and earlier. If the promise of post-Fordist socialism (Thompson 2002) has succeeded in delivering only highly segregated labour markets, what does good work in these sectors look like? How sustainable, environmentally and economically, is the expansion of these activities? And what is the geography of that expansion?

This thesis presents what I regard as the current failure of creative industries policy to address these questions. Consistent with my background, experience and inclination, I have done so not in a spirit of 'pure' critique, but in a manner that seeks to ask these questions in the hope that, by addressing them, we can develop a different set of political answers.

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## **Appendix**

### **Statements by Co-Authors of Joint Publications**

PAGE/PAGES  
EXCLUDED  
UNDER  
INSTRUCTION  
FROM  
UNIVERSITY

## **Part 2: Submitted publications**

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2.1 Not so Cool Britannia, The Role of Creative Industries in Economic  
Development,  
*International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp 67-77  
**Oakley, 2004**

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2.2 Include us out - economic development and social policy in the creative  
industries,

*Cultural Trends*, Vol 14, No. 4, pp.283-302

**Oakley, 2006**

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2.3 *The Art of Innovation* (with Andy Pratt & Brooke Sperry).

NESTA

**Oakley *et al*, 2008**

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2.4 Getting out of place: the mobile creative class takes on the local: A UK  
perspective on the creative class,  
in Kong & O'Connor J (Eds), *Creative Economies, Creative Cities: Asian-  
European Perspectives*, Springer, Berlin.  
**Oakley, 2009a**

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*2.5 Art Works*

Creativity, Culture and Education

**Oakley, 2009b**

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2.6 The disappearing arts – creativity and innovation after the creative industries.

*International Journal of Cultural Policy*. Vol. 15 No.4 pp 403-413

**Oakley, 2009c**

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2.7 From Bohemia to Britart – Art Students over 50 years.

*Cultural Trends*, Vol. 18. No. 4. Pp 281-294

**Oakley, 2009d**

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