

THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES: Definitions, Quantification and Practice

Simon Roodhouse

Introduction

This paper examines the definitional and quantification dynamics of the New Labour Creative Industries policy from 1998 to 2004 which replaced earlier Labour Party cultural industry interests articulated in the 1980s by the Labour controlled GLC. It focuses on an empirical understanding of the sector and specifically subsectors such as designer fashion, and graphics, through primary baseline analysis. It first considers the New Labour Creative Industries policy definitional framework and economic claims. It finds that there is conceptual confusion, at sector and subsectoral level, and the concept, which has yet to be owned by the subsectors, is identified and accepted by the industry. This has led to a reappraisal of the definitional framework from a subsectoral, regional and local perspective, because data, if it exists, an inaccurate and often misleading evidential base.

Secondly, consideration is given to the sources of data collection which underpin the policy, its reliability, and relevance to local and regional economic, cultural policy and practice. It then demonstrates that collecting primary data at local and regional levels employing a practitioner/business led definitional framework related to the national SIC coding system is an alternative means of building a realistic analysis of the sector which is recognizable by those in the industry.

Thirdly, it suggests that the creative industry policy is exclusive and not inclusive, that the definition is pragmatic with no justifiable rationale. Furthermore the data used as evidence to support the policy is unreliable and flawed when placed in the context of subsectors, locality and regions.

Finally it concludes by suggesting that the introduction of a creative industries policy has inadvertently encouraged an emerging reconceptualisation of the cultural industries, particularly arts practice: culture as business, not, the 'Tate' effect, aesthetic peer group determined public culture.

A Contorted and Torturous Definitional Historical Discourse

The body of work is posited on successive United Kingdom (UK) national governments and their agencies defining and redrawing boundaries, resulting in continuous public cultural policy and practice turbulence since 1945, commencing with the establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain (Pick & Anderton, 1999). The pragmatic determination of these boundaries that is definitions, with no obvious rationale for inclusion or exclusion lends itself to an interpretation of a public sector domain engaged in restrictive cultural practice; that is boundaries are constrained enough to match the level of available resources at any given time. It is the government administrative machinery responding to national policy by providing manageable and

controllable categories, classifications and frameworks for the allocation of public funds rather than a rational empirically informed inclusive system, hence measurable, which conforms to the requirements of evidence based policy (Solesbury, 2001). Urban regeneration (Roodhouse and Roodhouse, 1997) and the creative industries (Roodhouse, 2003) by the New Labour administration exemplify this practice.

The impact of this continuous boundary redefinition through national government machinery and by political parties for the arts, creativity and culture works against cohesion, interaction and connectivity although much is said by politicians about “joined up policy and action”. In particular, it encourages isolationism between national, regional, local government and agencies by relying on departmentalisation and compartmentalisation as the organisational means of delivery. As an illustration, culture resides within the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and is also found in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who fund the British Council, (British Council, 1998, 2004) the Ministry of Defence which resources a substantial number of museums, galleries and musical bands, the Department of Trade and Industry which supports creative industries through the Small Business Service including the export effort of these businesses; the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (Allen & Shaw, 2001) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) which provides entry to work and workforce development in the cultural field (North West Universities Association, 2004). This incidentally excludes all the devolved cultural arrangements for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

This chaotic organisational pattern is replicated, at regional level, with DCMS sponsored Cultural Consortia, the Arts Council, the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), the Sports Council, the Tourist Boards, Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), and local authorities along with the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), Small Business Service, including Business Link, not to mention the plethora of sub-regional intermediaries funded from the public purse, all pursuing differing cultural agendas, definitional frameworks (Hamilton & Scullion, 2002). Although attempts are made at overarching regional strategies, there is not as yet a shared understanding of and agreement to a definitional framework to operate and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies. This leads for example to data collection replication which requires additional resource allocated for coordination.

These issues were fore grounded by the 1997 “New Labour” government engagement in the creative industries concept, claimed to be a significant contributor to the UK knowledge economy (DCMS, 1998, 2001). This concept generated by Leadbetter and Oakley is a contemporary reinvention of “Old Labour” GLC oriented cultural model. The Labour controlled Greater London Council (GLC) provided a significant challenge to the definitional status quo in the early 1980s at a time of high unemployment, significant industrial decline, and diminishing public funds for the arts by re-introducing the cultural industries model derived from social science and popular culture theorists such as Bourdieu. The introduction of the cultural and creative industries exemplars gave rise to a re-appraisal of the role and function of the

'traditional' arts, in economic terms (Myerscough, 1988), and in relation to new technologies such as instant printing, cassette recording and video making (O'Connor, 1999). So the concept of culture as an industry in a public policy context was introduced. The arts, described by the GLC as the 'traditional arts', were subsumed into a broader definitional framework which included 'the electronic forms of cultural production and distribution – radio, television, records and video – and the diverse range of popular cultures which exist in London' (London Industrial Strategy 1985). The eventual successor body, the London Assembly and the executive Mayor of London have rekindled the theme (London Development Agency, 2003) this time with a focus on intervention in the creative industry networks and linkages. However, the creative industries development is derived from a longer history associated with defining and redefining the arts as an industry sector (Roodhouse, 1997; Calhoun, Lupuma & Postone, 1993) and the relationship of the arts and media as cultural industries for example which others have addressed (O'Connor, 1999; Throsby, 2001; Pratt, 1997; Garnham, 1987).

The successor creative industry concept generated by DEMOS (Leadbetter & Oakley, 1999) constructed as a component of the knowledge economy model, can be found in one (Cunningham, 2002) of four key policy themes for the DCMS, that is, economic value. It can be argued that the theme of economic value is a maturing of the Thatcherite ethos that is efficiency, effectiveness, value for money, and market forces. Smith the first New Labour Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport reinforces this interpretation: "*ensuring that the full economic and employment impact of the whole range of creative industries is acknowledged and assisted by government*" (Smith, 1998). It was after all a continuation of the cultural economic rationale developed earlier by Walpole.

The government through the Creative Industries Taskforce, chaired by Smith defined the creative industries boundaries. The definition employed is largely pragmatic with little in the way of a rationale (Roodhouse, 2003): "*those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property*" (DCMS, 1998). The industrial activity sub-sectors within which this activity primarily takes place are: "*advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio*" (DCMS, 1998). The representation of these activities as the UK creative industry sector generates structural and intellectual location tensions, for example architecture relates to construction and marginally engages with the arts and antiques trade, similarly, the arts and antiques trade has little or nothing to do with interactive leisure software. It is an emerging policy construct the DCMS has yet to embed both intellectually and practically in the consciousness of those working in the field. As a consequence the concept has more in common with the developing global economic interest in the knowledge economy (Leadbetter & Oakley, 1999; Howkins, 2001; Caves, 2000; Florida, 2002) than the DCMS designated constituent activities (the sub-sectors).

Of particular note in this definitional discourse is the equitable inclusion of both public and private sector activity in public cultural policy by re-designating cultural activity as creative industries; and engaging with convergence arguments generated through advances in technology (Flew, 2002; Cunningham, Hearn, Cox, Ninan, & Keane, 2003). Fundamentally this growing re-conceptualisation facilitates a reassessment of the traditional forms of policy intervention in support of the arts and culture (Roodhouse, 2002). As elaborated by Cunningham (Cunningham, 2002) the term creative industries offers a workable solution that enables cultural industries and creative arts to become enshrined within a definition that breaks down the rigid sustainability of the long-standing definitions of culture and creative arts, to create coherency through democratising culture in the context of commerce, whereby creativity can become coupled alongside enterprise and technology to become sectors of economic growth, through the commercialisation of creative activity and intellectual property. Cunningham confirms "*Creative Industries is a term that suits the political, cultural and technological landscape of these times. It focuses on the twin truths that (i) the core of 'culture' is still creativity, but (ii) creativity is produced, deployed, consumed and enjoyed quite differently in post-industrialised societies.*" (Cunningham, 2002)

This move from a traditional arts definition established by the Arts Council of Great Britain and successor bodies, "the arts for arts sake" argument (Jowell, 2004)

Economic and Statistical Parameters

Attempts have been made, by cultural economists, statisticians and cultural geographers largely since the early 1980s, (Myerscough, 1988; O'Brien and Feist, 1995; Pratt, 1999; and Jeffcut, 2004), to arrive at suitable categorisations for the sector. Pratt for example argues that value chain and domain categorisation is a useful mechanism. This approach generalises the problem and reduces the importance of sub sectors and specifying the activities within them. Whilst Jeffcut, from a knowledge management perspective suggests that the only way to understand the industry is as a cultural ecology. This relationship and interaction approach side steps the key issue which is a detailed explanation of the sub sector activity categories. Cunningham and particularly Hearn (Hearn Pace & Roodhouse, 2005) take this further by engaging with a value chain ecology which relies on a thorough understanding of networks and shared detailed classifications developed by the author. What seems to have emerged from this work is a recognition that the Office for National Statistics' (a UK government agency) Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) and the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) provide a common, imperfect, but nevertheless verifiable structure to collect and analyse data which corresponds with European, North America and Australasian systems. For example Table 1 provides an integrated definitional model based on the Australian SIC and SOC system used recently to collect primary baseline data on the music sub sector of the creative industries in Queensland, Australia (Cox, Ninan, Hearn, Roodhouse, & Cunningham, 2004).

Table 1: CIRAC, ACLC, ANZSIC Business Activity Concordance Table

CMIC (1)	ACLC (2) AND UKSIC EQUIVALENTS	ANZSIC (3)
1. Music Composition (incl. Composers & Songwriters)	231 Music Composition <i>92.31 Artistic and Literary creation and Interpretation</i>	9242 Creative Arts
5. Record Company or Label	233 Record Companies and Distributors <i>22.31 Reproduction of sound recording</i>	2430 Recorded Media Manufacturing and Publishing
		4799 Wholesaling n.e.c.

Source: CIRAC, 2004

However economists and statisticians who are expected to quantify the creative and cultural industry and/or arts activity to provide informed data for policy evaluation and development continue to be dogged by this tortuous and contorted definitional history (Barrière & Santagata, 1997; Evans, 1997). The weakness and inconsistencies of the definitional frameworks, for example, become apparent when used to quantify and determine the value of artistic and/or aesthetic activity. It requires a shifting from generalised descriptors and categorisations such as advertising to specific analysis of its component parts. Authors such as Baumol (Baumol & Baumol, 1994) and Heatherington (Heatherington, 1992) who are interested in understanding the economics of the sector with assertions that aesthetic pleasure has at least as much value as the difference in returns between works of art and financial assets quickly find that there is no common understanding of art or aesthetics. This leads, to the ultimate question - how to define a work of art. Another issue for economists studying the cultural industries is the differentiation between artistic and industrial goods. Part of the difficulty here is that the total assimilation of art to commodities creates serious problems because art goods escape the standard rules of utilitarian market exchange (Barrière & Santagata, 1997). The consequences of this failure to engage in establishing common workable definitions is summed up by Towse in considering the visual arts (Arts Council England research report 31, p7. 1996, *“The main point is that whichever definition is used, it is bound to produce different research findings.”* This has led over time to “the paucity of alternative data

sets with which to test the assertion(s) in practice” (Arts Council England research report 31, p2). Consequently even if the definitional jungle referred to can be avoided, there are difficulties in successfully locating cultural product within the accepted norms of economic practice. The fault line for cultural economists in delivering convincing economic analysis is the lack of clarity and consistency in defining cultural practice.

New Labour Creative Industries Claims

Nevertheless, the DCMS, 28 years after the UNESCO report published an audit in 1998, with a follow up in 2001 based on this secondary data, - the Creative Industries Mapping Documents, (1998 and 2001) which claimed that these industries generated £57 billion (1998) and £112bn (2001) revenues, and employment of circa 1 million (1998), and 1.3 million (2001) described in Table 2 by sub-sector:[I should have said earlier that of course the choice of activities was and remains controversial – why is the antiques trade ‘creative’ but museum exhibitions attracting millions of tourists not ?]

Table 2: U K Creative Industries headline Data, 1998 and 2001

Activity	Revenues 1998 and 2001 (£Bn)	Employment 1998 and 2001 (Thousands)
Advertising	4.0 3.0	96,000 93,000
Architecture	1.5 1.7	30,000 21,000
Arts and Antiques	2.2 3.5	39,700 37,000
Crafts	0.4 0.4	25,000 24,000
Design	12.0 26.7	23,000 76,000
Designer Fashion	0.6 0.6	11,500 12,000
Film/video	0.9 3.6	33,000 45,000
Leisure Software	1.2 1.0	27,000 21,000
Music	3.6 4.6	160,000 122,000
Performing Arts	0.9 0.5	60,000 74,000
Publishing	16.3 18.5	125,000 141,000
Software/ computer services	7.5 36.4	272,000 555,000
Television and Radio	6.4 12.1	63,500 102,000
Total	£57 bn 112.5bn	Circa 1,000,000 1,322,000

Source: DCMS creative industry mapping documents, 1998, 2001.

There are the usual health warnings associated with these statistics and recommendations for further work to be carried out in collecting and verifying the data underpinning the document. In particular it recommends; “Continuing to improve the collection of robust and timely data on the creative industries, based on a common understanding of coverage” (DCMS, 2001)

The data in interactive leisure software, designer fashion (Roodhouse, S., 2003), and crafts subsectors was identified as particularly weak. When considering this matter at the regional level, the position is dismal, with little information available (City University, 2000). Consequently one of the key issues identified was; *“The need for more mapping to provide a better picture of what is happening on the ground and help inform policy development. The mapping also needs to be based on a common understanding of the coverage of the creative industries.”* (DCMS, 2001)

However, the DCMS has recently developed a regional cultural data framework (Wood, 2004). This has yet to be accepted, not least because it does not universally conform to the national data collection classifications, relies on generalised notions of domains and a limited interpretation of value chains. This can only be perceived as a fundamental structural weakness, when increasing emphasis is placed on evidence based cultural policy and comparative international benchmarking. Despite spasmodic attempts (O’Brien & Feist, 1995; Davies & Lindley, 2003), the paucity of empirical evidence available and the structural weakness of the definitional frameworks to inform cultural policy, management or practice particularly in the fields of museums, galleries and the creative industries (Roodhouse, 2003) to support the formulation and development of policy at local, regional (Devlin, Gibson, Taylor, & Roodhouse, 1998; Devlin, Gibson, Taylor & Roodhouse, 1999; Roodhouse & Taylor, 2000) and national levels continues.

Sources of Data

Much of the statistical evidence, however, used by the public sector agencies and government departments referred to earlier is traced to national census data, the Department for Education and Skills’ labour force survey, and new earnings studies along with several studies by the Office for National Statistics. Eurostat, on behalf of the European Union, has also been generating information in this field. It is, however, in reality secondary data when used in the context of the creative industries, with all the inherent weaknesses of such an approach (City University, 2000). This becomes worse with questionable sources when consideration is given to the data employed to support the DCMS creative industry mapping documents (Roodhouse, 2004). Much of this information is unverifiable, collected over differing periods of time, using unrelated methodologies. The Department has attempted to sift through these sources and select on the basis of compatibility. This process, however, reinforced the difficulties of using a variety of unverified sources which are not collected in a commonly defined framework. Smith confirmed however that collecting and analysing data to underpin creative industries policy is problematic, and past claims difficult to substantiate (DCMS, 1998): *“One of the problems in this whole area is that the precise figures (for the creative industries) are hard to come by. Many of these areas of activity are of course dominated by small and medium sized companies almost working on a cottage industry basis, with a handful of big players striding amongst them; it is a pattern that makes definition and accurate counting very difficult but even more essential if public policy is to be maintained”* (Smith, 1998) Rather worryingly, a similar view was expressed as

long ago as 1970 in the UNESCO report, Cultural Policy in Great Britain (Green, Wilding & Hoggart, 1970).

Implications

It remains the case that in the United Kingdom, Europe and Australia there is no consistent definitional framework and resultant verifiable and reliable data available to assist cultural managers and policy makers. This for example calls into question the accuracy of the claims made for the creative class (Florida, R., 2002).

The most recent UK inspired policy initiative, the creative industries, which places significance on individual creativity as an economic wealth generator and contributor to the development of knowledge economies, fails to recognise for example the specific visual arts contribution within the current DCMS creative industries sector definition and if to make matters worse the government quango the Arts Council of England has additionally confused the picture by defining visual arts as a specific practice alongside crafts, architecture and fine art. There is equal confusion when economic and occupational definitions are considered as these do not marry with each other or the market approach found in the DCMS creative industries definition.

What is required is the identification of criteria by which judgements can be made derived from the commonalities to be found in the international definitional landscape involving practitioners, economists, statisticians, cultural managers and policy makers. This points ultimately to "biting the bullet" and engaging in establishing criteria to define activity such as sculpture.

Unless we are consistent with definitional frameworks the data used by cultural managers will always remain unreliable, suspect and partial. Are cultural managers satisfied with this and the reliance on questionable data to inform policy, advocacy and management decisions? For example, measurement of performance relies on a definitive baseline to start from, in other words if we do not have a common understanding of what say the visual arts are or what an artist is, how can we measure investment and results?

There is a case to consider the importance of creative industries as a defining mechanism for society. In other words, arguing for coherence and convergence, creative industries as a manifestation of society, the richness in diversity concept. By taking this stance it is possible to incorporate the wider issues that concern society, such as the environment, urban regeneration, social cohesion and community development. The other matter, which complicates these definitional debates, is how and who decides what art is, including aesthetics. In other words many of the public agencies such as the Arts Councils, Design Councils and Film Councils are charged with doing just this by promoting the creative industries making excellence accessible and educating society. While this may be admirable it poses problems such as, what is excellence in the creative industries, determined by whom and using whose criteria? In other words the established national agencies have been

given within their remit the task of determining our corporate sense of aesthetic. Is this right?

Quite apart from facing up to defining or not aesthetics in the creative industries, we have yet to adopt a sensible approach to creativity in non-creative settings. Quite apart from this a significant sector, museums galleries and the heritage are excluded from virtually all published definitions of the creative industries, which is difficult to rationalise.

The emerging definitional framework debate can be characterised as a struggle between, the aesthetic (elitist) versus business (democratic) models.

An alternative to these approaches is to,

- Collect data defined by product, service and /or process
- Recognise a spectrum of activity free of aesthetic judgement and intervene on a business, research and development basis.

Ultimately, it may be necessary to insure that activities encompassed in whichever creative industries definitional framework is ultimately used, are derived from the directly affected constituencies and stakeholders by attempting to consistently describe what they actually want.

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